Israel's Bold Choice The Editors, Hillel Halkin

THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Impossibility of Conservatism
Alan Wolfe

The Aftermath of Monica
Katha Pollitt

June 7, 1999

The Wrong Race

Why a Senate run would be bad for Hillary ... and worse for the Democrats

By Michelle Cottle

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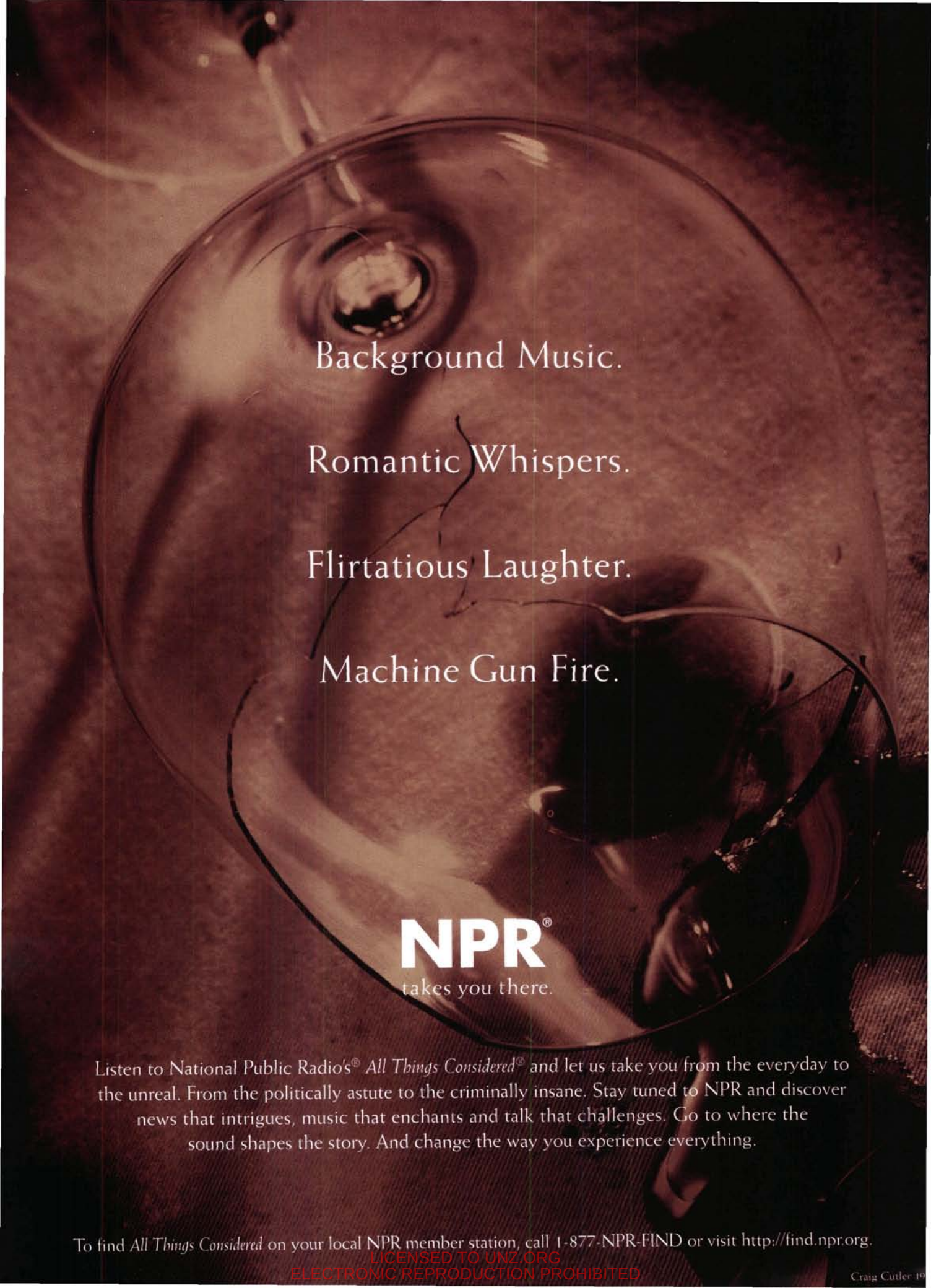

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CORRESPONDENCE

Old wine, new bottles

TO THE EDITORS:
For the first time, I can literally read a magazine with no effort. I love the new font, its size, clarity, and spaciousness. I can almost read it without glasses.

JESSICA BRITT
San Anselmo, California

TO THE EDITORS:
The new NEW REPUBLIC is indeed appropriate for today. With its new format, it has become as dizzying and distracting as the world we live in. Thank you for adding more dazzling dissonance to our already badgered lives.

DENA GLASGOW
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITORS:
I like the new format, but don't get carried away! I subscribe to TNR because I want to read the written word. If I wanted pictures, I would subscribe to *Playboy*. Keep up the good writing!

DAVID W. HUEY
Bismarck, North Dakota

TO THE EDITORS:
Congratulations. Now TNR looks like every other slick magazine on the newsstand.

LAURENCE FRANK
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITORS:
I generally like the new format, but those thick black lines have got to go. I find the between-column lines on your one-page columns (TRB, Diarist, etc.) especially distracting. These lines give the whole layout a funereal look.

MAYER G. FREED
Chicago, Illinois

Target practice

TO THE EDITORS:
Your April 26 & May 3 editorial "On Target" about the virtues of smart munitions was convincing right up to your idea of trading off new F-22 fighters for more munitions. The F-22 is the first new air superiority fighter developed by the Air Force in a quarter-century; without its stealth and other advanced features, successful warfare against any halfway decent adversary would be unlikely. Besides, the Clinton administration has already cut the production goal from 750 to 648, then to 438, then to 339. How low do you want to go?

Moreover, it is important to recognize the tradeoff between the cost of munitions and the cost of the planes that deliver

them. The cruise missiles carried by B-52s cost more than $1 million each because they need to have their own propulsion to compensate for the non-stealthy B-52's inability to safely penetrate modern air defenses. The precision munitions carried on the stealthy B-2 bomber, which can penetrate air defenses, only cost $13,000 each. Multiply those munition costs by the 40,000 aimpoints attacked in the six-week air war during Operation Desert Storm, and ask yourself whether the B-2 still seems overpriced.

LOREN THOMPSON
Chief Operating Officer
Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia

Rulebook

TO THE EDITORS:
John B. Judis makes some shrewd observations in his article on capitalism and ethics ("Value-free," April 26 & May 3). But he misses the point on John Wesley. He correctly points out Wesley's two rules: Gain all you can and save all you can. But he omits the third rule: Give all you can. How serious is this omission? Wesley wrote that all who observe the first two rules without the third "will be two-fold more the children of hell than ever they were before." Be warned, Judis!

Anybody trying to understand "the Protestant ethic" might also ponder the findings of the Roman Catholic priest-sociologist Andrew Greeley: "Irish Catholics are second only to Jews on most items designed to measure their endorsement of 'the Protestant ethic.'" The relationships between religious belief and economic practices are real but complex.

ROGER L. SHINN
Southbury, Connecticut

Communist destiny

TO THE EDITORS:
In his review of my *Russia Under Western Eyes* ("East Is East," April 26 & May 3), Richard Pipes in effect reproaches me for not writing a different book. But he has already written that book himself several times. In fact, his review is a short course of that oeuvre—and advanced copy for his current foray into grand theory, *Property and Freedom*.

Pipes's eternal theme is that Russia, whether white or red, has been a "patrimonialism," Max Weber's term for a regime in which the sovereign is proprietor of the land and its inhabitants (the usual name for this is "Oriental despotism"). In Pipes's view, this alleged Russian patrimonialism emerged in earliest Muscovy, and, though some of its features changed over time (the liberalizing Great Reforms of Alexander II in the 1860s, the legislative Duma of 1906), the system's autocratic essence endured until tsarism's end. Thus Giles Fletcher in 1589 and Marquis de Custine in 1839 accurately described an eternal Asiatic Russia.

Pipes's crowning point, however, is that the Soviet regime, beneath its Marxist veneer, remained traditional Russian patrimonialism. Thus, in 1974, in his *Russia Under the Old Regime*, we find that the "extraordinary" police legislation Alexander III promulgated after his father's assassination in 1881 was "the real constitution under which ... Russia has been ruled ever since." What is more, legislation of this type "spread after the Revolution of 1917 by way of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany to other authoritarian states in Europe and overseas. One is justified in saying, therefore, that ... the Russian Criminal Code [is] to totalitarianism what the Magna Carta is to liberty."

Nor are such averments isolated slips of the pen; they are the leitmotif of all Pipes's writing. They surface with crescendo in his review. It was "the interests—I say the interests, not the ideology—of the *nomenklatura* [that] required totalitarianism at home and expansion abroad," which if true would equate Soviet Russia with Idi Amin's Uganda. Given such a regime of thugs, therefore, "[i]deology had little to do with [the cold war], even if Moscow liked to depict the conflict in such terms." One wonders whether Pipes has read John Lewis Gaddis's *We Now Know*, or David Holloway's *Stalin and the Bomb*, or even the documents assembled in Moscow for an abortive "Nuremberg trial" of communism in 1992 at which Pipes was a witness and that were later published by Vladimir

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Bukovsky. All these materials abound in evidence that the Soviet leadership, even behind closed doors, reasoned until the end in terms of "international class war."

No sensible person would dispute that Russia's authoritarian past weighed heavily on her twentieth-century destiny. But to assert that communism was nothing more than patrimonialism painted red boggles the mind. If this were true then the twentieth century becomes incomprehensible. Indeed, Pipes himself cannot hew to the straight and narrow patrimonial path. Thus, in 1990, on the first page of his *Russian Revolution*, elementary historical reality obliges him to declare, this time accurately, that the Revolution "was a great deal more than a contest for power in one country: what the victors . . . had in mind was . . . no less than 'overturning the world.' By that was meant a complete redesign of state, society, economy, and culture all over the world for the ultimate purpose of creating a new human being." "Patrimonialism," you say? The cold war came about precisely because the West didn't want to succumb to this brave new Communist world, "a type of regime unknown to history."

Instead of reducing this distinctively twentieth-century phenomenon to a replay of a caricature Muscovy, Pipes should have taken a cue from his presidential hero and onetime boss, Ronald Reagan. For the Gipper won the big one precisely because he always took Communist ideology with the grim seriousness it deserved.

MARTIN MALIA
Berkeley, California

RICHARD PIPES REPLIES:
Ordinarily, when authors respond to criticism, they defend themselves by claiming that they have been misquoted, misunderstood, misinterpreted, or what have you. Martin Malia chooses a different, most original approach: he launches a counterattack, criticizing my work instead of defending his own.

Would it not have been better had he responded to my criticisms? They included complaints such as that he ignored Petrine Western views of Russia as an "Oriental despotism"; that he wrote pure intellectual history without attention to forces other than ideas and "perceptions"; that he had next to nothing to say about those Russian intellectuals who, unlike him, considered Russia not to be European; that he misinformed his readers about the World War I antecedents of the February Revolution; that he overstated the ideological factor in the Soviet regime; and so on and so forth.

And above all: that at no point did he bother to justify his central thesis that Russia is a part of European civilization by first defining "Europe" and then demonstrating that Russia qualified under this definition. Professor Malia must be aware that his unwillingness or inability to address any of these criticisms can be interpreted to mean that he is tacitly conceding their correctness.

Play on words

TO THE EDITORS:
Not About Nightingales has been in print for a year; if Robert Brustein had read it, he might have avoided making such obvious errors ("The Artifact Museum," April 5). He describes Canary Jim Allison as "a self-educated trustee [he means "trusty," but never mind] who, having read some Keats, tries to write his own poetry. . . . [H]is recitation of 'Ode to a Nightingale' provides the only bearable language in the play." In fact it is Eva, not Jim, who recites "When I have fears that I may cease to be." Jim doesn't want to write poetry, and—hence the play's title—his writing will be "not about nightingales."

If Brustein had read the published play's introduction, he would have learned something about the play's origins. Instead, he substitutes his own inventions, for instance, that Williams "had the good sense to stow the play away in his trunk after it was rejected by the Group Theater." Actually, Williams was proud of the play. In his foreword to *Orpheus Descending* (1957), he writes:

> And so I drifted back to St. Louis again, and wrote my fourth long play which was the best of the lot. It was called *Not About Nightingales* and it concerned prison life, and I have never written anything since then that could compete with it in violence and horror.

It was that paragraph that prompted my sister to go in search of *Not About Nightingales*, an odyssey that led us both to the Alley Theatre in Houston, and her to Austin, Texas. As we began rehearsing in London, reports came in of prisoners repeatedly tortured and beaten in Wormwood Scrubs. As we re-rehearsed in New York, we read, "In the eight years before Thomas Pizzuto was fatally beaten while serving a 90-day sentence at the Nassau County jail, more than 100 inmates filed notices or claims telling horrifying tales of abuse at the hands of guards there" (*The New York Times*, February 18).

Such complementarity between prisons then and now gives our production its immediacy, melodrama in the true sense, because only melodrama can convey such brutal facts of life. Tennessee's manuscript is annotated with comments like, "if you think my play is melodrama, read this!"—referring to a recent news item about prisons.

Brustein sees only the play's form and none of its content. This leads him to a painfully arid disquisition on the play's influences, among which he cites "a lot of Big House movies." This is an interesting comment. Far too much theater and theater criticism draws on Hollywood rather than life for its inspiration. To use Wilde's expression, "It plays with shadows and does not deal directly with things." To Brustein, prison evokes images of Warner Brothers movies. For Tennessee Williams, it was fact first and then a metaphor. Moved by the terrible facts, his prison is also a metaphor, about his loneliness, about dictatorship, about fascism. In his drawing of the prison's two dictators, Butch O'Fallon and Boss Whalen, he shows with extraordinary insight the opposite emotions which dwell in the core of their cruelty.

If Brustein had seen *The Big House*, he would not only be aware that Williams used many of its situations—one of the convicts is called Butch and carries a razor—and some lines of its dialogue, he would also realize how confidently and creatively Williams uses and transforms that material. *The Big House* is a very good film. But *Not About Nightingales* is what made Tennessee Williams Tennessee instead of Tom, the great poet and dramatist of this century.

CORIN REDGRAVE
New York, New York

ROBERT BRUSTEIN REPLIES:
I regret that I ascribed Keats's lines to the wrong character, but I am unrepentant regarding my opinion of the play: *Not About Nightingales* is no substitute for *The Big House*. Corin Redgrave's passion for this shoulder-shotten warhorse shouldn't surprise us—after all, he's riding it. The actor has just received a Tony nomination for his performance as Boss Whalen, and his sister Vanessa is the one who first let the old nag out of the stable. Nevertheless, I can't share the Redgraves' admiration for this moth-eaten mount. Outrage over fascist prison conditions does not guarantee a work of subtlety or weight. For all his social passion, I'm afraid that, at this early point in his career, Tennessee is still plain old Tom.

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Live a Little

MY GRANDFATHER SURVIVED three heart attacks and a stroke over the course of his lifetime. And he did so thanks to some of the best medicine that insurance could buy: a heart bypass operation, extensive hospitalization, plus literally thousands of hours of one-on-one nursing care after the stroke left him partially paralyzed. I remember when the stroke hit: the doctors predicted he'd live maybe nine more months. That was in 1986. He passed away last year.

It would be near impossible to add up my grandfather's medical bills, but I'm sure they totaled hundreds of thousands of dollars. He benefited from a wide range of pharmaceutical products, the most advanced medical technology in the world, and care from highly trained specialists. Above all, he benefited from a health care financing system willing to subsidize such extravagance at every level—from the training of the surgeons to the research that invented blood-thinners to the salary of the worker who lifted him in and out of his wheelchair every day.

I thought about that last week when I read an article on rising health insurance premiums. It was merely the latest confirmation of a trend many economists have long predicted: that, after years of stability, the real price of health care in America is about to start climbing again. According to a study published last fall in the journal *Health Affairs*, the nation's total health care bill will likely go up by 3.4 percent annually over the next four years—compared with a rate of just 1.5 percent in the period from 1993 to 1996. By 2007, the study predicted, health care will soak up 16 percent of the gross domestic product. That would be quite a lot of money, particularly when you consider that we already sink more than 13 percent of GDP into health care—more than any other nation and well more than we spent in 1970, when health care was just seven percent of GDP.

The predictions are probably right. Today, about 85 percent of Americans who hold private insurance are enrolled in health maintenance organizations or other forms of managed care, which hold down costs by emphasizing preventive medicine; controlling access to tests, treatments, and specialists; and simply bidding down the services of doctors and hospitals. Most of the people in these plans shifted over from costly fee-for-service insurance only in the past few years, and that transformation is the primary reason health care spending has remained stable during that time. But the cost containment from HMOs seems to have been a onetime phenomenon. Now expenditures on health care are going back up, if at a somewhat reduced clip, in part because people are starting to demand some of the things HMOs have been denying them, in part because the population is living longer, and in part because researchers continue to come up with expensive new technological innovations that patients want, from Viagra to the protease inhibitors that keep HIV in check.

Once the bill for all of this spending comes due, in the form of higher insurance premiums and more government spending, you can bet that a chorus of experts and high-minded officials will start insisting that we're spending too much. Some will do what former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm did back in 1992: they'll come right out and say we need to stop coddling the elderly with the kind of "long-shot medicine" that sustained my grandfather and made him more comfortable in his final years. Others will strike more cautious tones, preaching the need to be more efficient in our outlays, but the end result will be much the same: less generous care, particularly at the margins. In a sense, we're already hearing early versions of this argument in the ongoing debate over Social Security and Medicare—two programs in which the current level of expenditures is widely believed to be unsustainable over the long run.

But this may be a case where the average citizen, who intuitively wants to keep spending that money, knows more than the average expert, who insists it's not possible. After all, we spend far more on computers than we did 20 years ago, but nobody makes a fuss about that. The reason is that computers have made our economy stronger and our lives discernibly easier. Well, the same logic ought to apply to health care. Among all of the things a nation's wealth could buy, surely the health of its citizens is near the top. And, while some critics might carp about inefficiency in the system, that inefficiency keeps a good chunk of our country employed—while enabling the population as a whole to work longer and harder.

To be sure, many critics question whether our robust health care spending really translates into robust health. They argue that, even though European nations spend less on health care, the differences in health care "outcomes" and life expectancy are minimal. But it is notoriously difficult to measure the impact of health care spending. For one thing, those comparatively frugal countries benefit from the pharmaceuticals and treatments largely subsidized by big spending in the United States. What's more, the benefit of more health care spending may be simply to provide a few more weeks here and there, or to make life just a little more comfortable for some of the nation's sickest people. This is not the kind of thing that makes a big difference statistically, but it is the kind of thing a society might rightly deem important. After all, this is what usually happens in societies as they progress economically: the percentage of labor time spent on producing bare necessities—food, shelter, and clothing—shrinks, freeing up greater resources for making life more pleasant.

This isn't to say we parcel out all of our health care dollars wisely. Among other things, we currently subsidize emergency care for the uninsured, which is at once very expensive and not terribly efficient at keeping people healthy, while denying them the basic care most other nations offer as a privilege of citizenship. But the solution to this problem is not to worry excessively about how big the bill has gotten; if anything, we should be making the case for spending even more money and then making sure it's meted out on a more egalitarian basis. (Sound crazy? No less a sober mind than MIT economist Paul Krugman once made a similar argument, speculating that spending as much as 30 percent of GDP on health care might not be unreasonable.)

Yes, there is one catch. If you want to spend that much money on health care, you have to find the money to spend. But that's not a problem—or, at least, it shouldn't be. We have enjoyed enormous gains in productivity over the past few years, which means as a nation we are creating more wealth—wealth that can easily be directed to health care rather than to, say, sport utility vehicles, either in the form of higher insurance premiums or (heaven forbid!) higher taxes. "The alternative uses of our resources are not necessarily more noble," Mickey Kaus once wrote in this space. He's right. There are a lot of things we could have bought my grandfather in his final months. But none was as valuable as the time itself.

JONATHAN COHN

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America . . .

from a critical distance

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

Bad Call

CALL ME ANYTIME, BABY. That is my blanket invitation to any president or presidential candidate who feels the need to unburden himself—or, more likely, herself—to a journalist. Elizabeth Dole, *The Washington Post* reports, has felt compelled to place unsolicited calls to at least four reporters. That follows President Clinton's disastrous decision to skip the middleman and call *The New York Times* himself to flack for Al Gore. A friend of mine at another daily complains of being constantly annoyed by calls from Gary Bauer.

And what do I get? All I've rated so far is an approach from the Natural Law Party's presidential candidate seeking a breakfast meeting. TNR, it seems, lacks the sufficient mass-market exposure to warrant unsolicited calls from candidates. Or maybe it's just me. Either way, I have to get my time with the top pols the old-fashioned way. I beg for it. I sent a note to Clinton Press Secretary Joe Lockhart (who has been ignoring my request for a meeting with the president offered a year ago by Lockhart's predecessor, Mike McCurry) to state that, should the president decide to make any more unsolicited calls, I would be happy to receive one. To sweeten the deal, I have promised Lockhart that the headline on the account of my chat with the president will be as follows:

BILL CLINTON: One Helluva Guy—The president, smart and witty, is a great conversationalist, too!

I AM STANDING BY THE PHONE, AND YET the president does not call. The big creep. I imagine his handlers have reined him in after his poor performance as a freelance press secretary. His now-famous call to the *Times*' Richard Berke, which was made to debunk doubts about the Gore campaign but wound up reinforcing them, has set Washington atwitter with theories. Some blame it on Clinton's insatiable need for attention at a time when Gore hasn't mentioned his name on the trail. Others see it as a way to distance himself from Gore so that his legacy (such as it is) could remain intact (relatively speaking), even if Gore loses.

But I think a much simpler dynamic is at work here. The culprit was Clinton-the-pleaser, trying hard to be agreeable to everyone he meets. He may well have meant to tell Berke that he had no worries about Gore's campaign, but, when he heard the reporter at the other end of the line, he didn't have the heart to do it. Sure I have doubts, he said. Your story is right on the money. It's the same Clintonian quality that prevented him from breaking with Monica Lewinsky, thus leading to impeachment. Or his reluctance to get tough with the gun lobby, thus sinking his gun-control proposals. Or his uneasiness about pointing fingers at Hollywood, thus missing an opportunity to reduce violent entertainment. Or his hesitance to offend Russia and China by pursuing a ground war in Kosovo, thus dooming the effort to failure. The man just craves approval.

GORE IS RIGHTLY FURIOUS AT HIS boss for the blunder. Actually, the call to the *Times* only compounded the problem of all of Clinton's earlier calls to his friends blabbing about Gore's weaknesses—calls that prompted the article in the first place. The episode became an unwelcome distraction just as Gore was trying to recover from his spring of vulnerability. (Indeed, *Newsweek*, which had planned a relatively puffy cover piece on Tipper and Al, toughened the story after Clinton's unhelpful contribution made headlines.)

Gore finally acted to stem the criticism that his campaign is leaderless and listless. Advisers scrapped their earlier plan to hold off on policy announcements until the fall. In Iowa, Gore unveiled his education plan—a package of proposals to shift from the Industrial Age model of classrooms to an Information Age model of one-on-one education. He'll roll out other pieces of his agenda in coming weeks. In part, this is a response to the unexpected strength of Bill Bradley. But it has more to do with George W. Bush, who, because of his dominant position among Republicans, has been able to start a general-election-style campaign early. Gore is calculating that his early shift to the "ideas phase" will pressure Bush and Bradley to give specifics to their own vague pronouncements.

Gore, by bringing in Tony Coelho as campaign chairman, is also answering the complaint that his campaign has too many chiefs and not enough braves. The punditry has panned Coelho because of his insider status and his history of overly aggressive fund-raising, which could draw more attention to Gore's own troubles on the issue. But that concern overstates Coelho's visibility and importance. He will serve primarily as an arbitrator who settles disputes between Gore advisers. Gore, borrowing from the corporate world, has discarded traditional hierarchy in favor of a network, or "web" of autonomous "cells." Gore aides, using corporate buzzwords, call the style "parallel processes" and "chaos management." Coelho's job is to make sure it doesn't degenerate into just plain chaos.

In the meantime, the Washington echo chamber continues to reverberate with tales of Gore's demise, albeit from many of the same prognosticators who prophesied Clinton's undoing early last year. It's worthwhile to note that one group doesn't share this view of Gore's downward spiral: Bush allies, who privately expect a very tight race in the general election. Bush advisers have been concerned about the unrealistically high expectations surrounding their candidate. Already, a *Newsweek* poll found Gore, who has badly lagged Bush in polls, down just nine percentage points in a hypothetical matchup. That suggests Gore just needs to wait out the storm. Maybe that's why Chairman Coelho, in his first week on the job, flew off to Portugal.

THE MOST ENDURING PROBLEM FOR Gore may turn out to be Clinton himself. Gore advisers once considered him an asset, and he may yet be. Gore, of course, needs to run on Clinton's economic record. But, at the moment, Americans are wearying of Clinton's sleaziness, and they seem willing to take it out on Gore. Clinton's popularity was artificially high during impeachment, when Americans rallied to his defense because they so disliked his enemies. But, now that he is out of danger, these foul-weather friends have drifted.

This shouldn't be surprising. Al Gore has just learned the same lesson as Dee Dee Myers, Susan McDougal, Webb Hubbell, Sidney Blumenthal, Monica Lewinsky, Kathleen Willey, Paul Begala, Ann Lewis, and, of course, Hillary Clinton—that being a Friend of Bill is a mixed blessing. "He is my friend," Gore said of his boss during the darkest moments of the Lewinsky scandal. Now, with one call to *The New York Times*, Clinton undercut his anointed successor.

When I started out on the White House beat, a senior Clinton aide wondered aloud why people held such personal hostility toward Clinton. I doubt he wonders anymore.

DANA MILBANK

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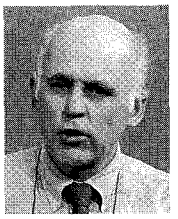

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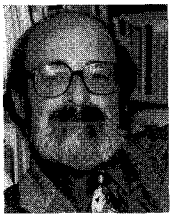

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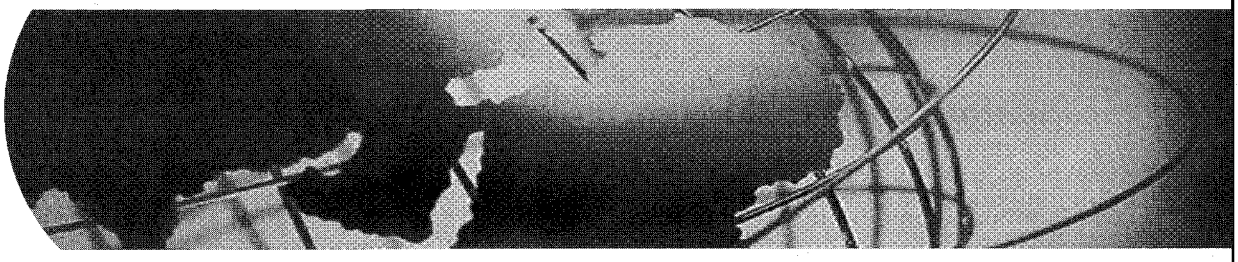

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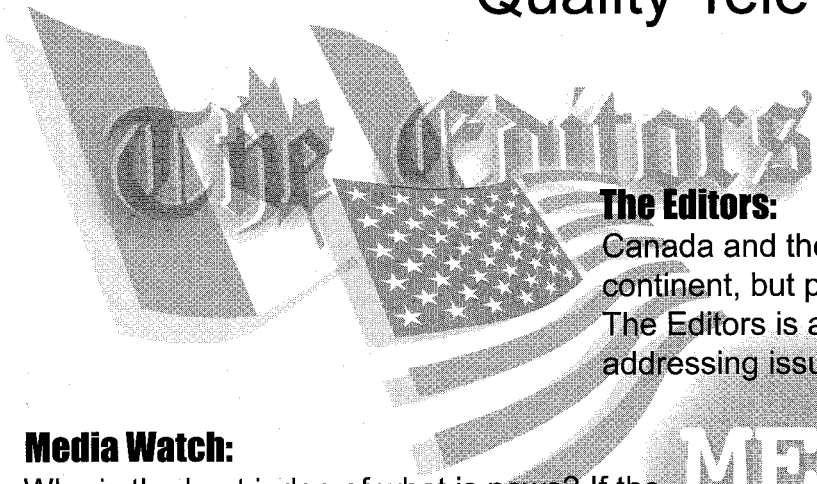

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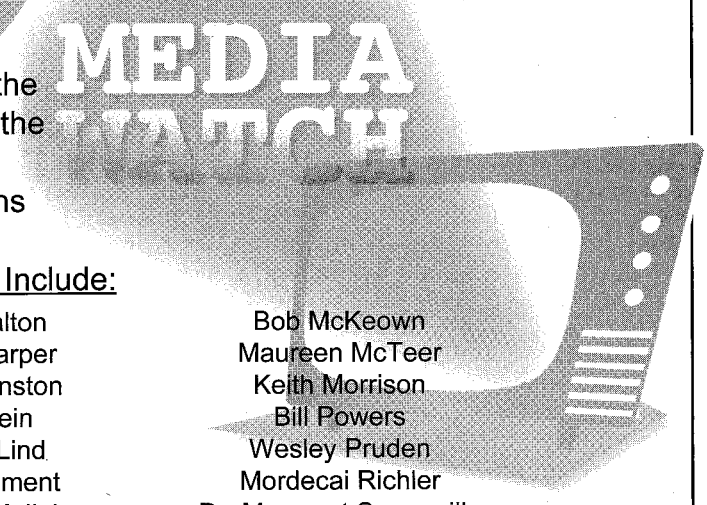

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Vital Center

THE THUNDERCLAP ELECTION of Ehud Barak marks the restoration to power in Israel of the most magnificent creation of Israeli political culture: the liberal soldier. The liberal soldier is a paradoxical figure. He fights wars to win them, but also to end them. He seeks peace, not conquest; security, not spoils. He picks up his gun, and he puts it down; he puts his gun down, and he picks it up; and whether he picks it up or puts it down is determined by prudence, not by a theory of history. He knows that there are enemies, but he knows also that enemies are not all there are. He is not afraid, and so he is not bellicose. He is a practical man, an analyst of obstacles and dangers, and so he is skeptical of eschatological promises. He is not intoxicated by his principles, and he does not seek to intoxicate others with them. Quite the contrary: he wants them to think lucidly. He brings to his fellow citizens nothing more exhilarating than realism, but his own experience has taught him that realism is a moral responsibility. He is a planner, not a visionary. And the defense of his country has made him the most natural of democrats. From the standpoint of the threat, after all, everyone is equal. The threat, and the defense against it, teaches inclusion. For this reason, he harbors no suspicion of politics, and he does not mistake military authority for political authority. He is not a demagogue, because he is too dour for demagoguery. He dreams only of fairness and safety. He does not dream, or pretend to dream, of God.

There are two figures in Israeli politics that do not fit this description. They are Benjamin Netanyahu and Shimon Peres; and the election of Ehud Barak represents a repudiation of both of them. Benjamin Netanyahu did not just fight the battle for Israel's security; he also promoted the battle into an article of faith. He robbed Israeli hope of its basis in reality, which is considerable. He attempted to sustain his society in a permanent state of apocalyptic excitation, in which no society can live. He wisely signed the memorandum at Wye, but he did not have the wisdom to see that his signature represented the end of the Likud's pessimism about the exchange of territory for peace, and hence the end of the Likud. (The party lost 13 seats in the Knesset last week, and is now down to 19.) He practiced a politics of polarization, nastily and expediently pitting classes and ethnicities and denominations against one another.

Shimon Peres, too, is an apocalyptic, except that he paints beautiful false pictures instead of ugly false pictures. In the aftermath of this week's election, Peres remarked: "As of tomorrow, this is a different Israel." This was typical. Peres has never understood the relationship of tomorrow to yesterday. He believes that history is putty; that the past can be eliminated by politics; that war is all that stands in the way of peace; that enmity is always a form of misunderstanding and fear is always a form of ignorance; that unreason can be bought off with prosperity. Peres has tried, and failed, to lull the Israeli public with his hallucinations of a "new Middle East." He is not an idealist. He is a fantasist. He does not see that toughness is a requirement of self-respect.

Benjamin Netanyahu is a soldier but not a liberal. Shimon Peres is a liberal but not a soldier. Together they created the terrible inflammation of Israeli politics that the Israeli electorate last week rejected by a margin of 56 percent to 44 percent. But Ehud Barak, like Yitzhak Rabin before him, is comfortable with the political uses of military force *and* the military uses of military force. If he succeeds in bringing peace with the Palestinians, it will be not least because they do not doubt his readiness to act unflinchingly against Palestinians who choose "armed struggle" over Oslo.

Barak has been admirably forthright about the limits of Israel's flexibility in any negotiation. He will not preside over a return to the preposterous borders of 1967; nor over the relinquishment of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem; nor over the dismantlement or the abandonment of all, or even most, of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank (though the Jewish settlers should not mistake him for a sentimentalist about their attainments); nor over the creation or the deployment of a modern Palestinian army between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Barak is not philosophically threatened by a Palestinian state, but he will also not allow his country to be physically threatened by a Palestinian state. Will this be enough for Yasir Arafat? Will this be enough for Bill Clinton? They had better prepare themselves—all who believe that the peace process is just the piece-by-piece process, whereby the Palestinians are satisfied in all their desires and demands, had better prepare themselves—for the obduracy of the peacemaker now in charge of Israel's government.

The results of the elections for the Knesset were not as unambiguous as the results of the election for prime minister.

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The Likud has been badly, even permanently, crippled. But Labor—or One Israel, as it is now called—lost eight seats and now has only 26 seats in a very mottled legislature. The big winner, certainly, was Shas, which gained seven seats and is now the third-largest party in the Knesset. The success of Shas should concentrate the secular Israeli mind. In matters of foreign policy, the ultra-Orthodox party is perfectly content to assist in the search for a secure peace; but it also represents religious obscurantism (its version of Judaism includes coarse and comic elements of folk religion), and class resentment (many secular poor Israelis voted for it), and political miscreancy (until last week it was led by Aryeh Deri, who has been convicted of corruption). Will Barak ask Shas to join his coalition? His proud secularism would be compromised, and he would risk the ire of the smaller secularist parties that would seem to be his natural partners in a government.

One of the most interesting lessons of this election has been its relocation of the great fissure in Israeli society. It turns out that the fissure is not about war and peace. There appears to be a growing center in Israeli politics that supports a cautious but genuine reconciliation with the Palestinians; and not even Palestinian terror has rattled its belief in the possibility of a secure peace soon. These were the voters who were stirred also by Barak's pledge to extricate Israel from southern Lebanon. (This, of course, involves a deal with Syria, and it remains to be seen if these voters will let the Golan go quite so gladly.) No, the fissure in Israel is about God and godlessness.

The ferocity of the quarrel between the religious and the secular is startling. Barak has admirably pledged to unify the country in this matter, too; but these questions do not lend themselves to the traditional arts of political compromise. They are questions, after all, about the truth or the falsehood of absolutes, and about the role of absolutes in an open society. Jews in Jerusalem who drive on the Sabbath and Jews in Jerusalem who do not drive on the Sabbath cannot both be right. They may learn to respect each other more; but driving on the Sabbath in Jerusalem will either be permitted or forbidden. And the same is true of the laws of marriage, and conversion, and the rest. Will Barak forcefully espouse the separation of synagogue and state? We hope so. In Israel, religion is damaging politics and politics is damaging religion.

And yet there is a sense in which Israeli society is not riven at all. In last week's election, 79 percent of the 4.3 million eligible voters in the country voted! This is a turnout that Americans can only envy, if we can imagine it all. The Israelis may be alienated from one another, but they are not alienated from their grand historical experiment in cultivating a democracy in a region where democracy is otherwise unknown. This, too, they grew in a desert. ■

Groundless

Is the president of the United States prepared to use ground troops in Kosovo, or is he not? On May 17, National Security Council spokesman David Leavy told *The New York Times*: "The U.S. position is clear. We're steadfast against this." The next day, however, Bill Clinton said, "We have not and will not take any option off the table." But then he quickly added that "we ought to stay with the [air-only] strategy that we have and work it through to the end." Got that?

Clinton Says He Might Send Ground Troops
—*The Washington Post*, May 19

Clinton Resists Renewed Calls for Ground Troops in Kosovo
—*The New York Times*, same day

Even if the president could summon the decisiveness to send in ground troops, his previous failure even to plan for that eventuality has already ensured that a ground operation would be more politically and militarily difficult than it would have been if NATO had gone in early with a massive one-two air-ground punch. Three things have happened since the desultory air war started: the NATO alliance has fragmented, as wavering members, less sure of U.S. resolve, have begun to search for an accommodation with Milosevic; the Russians, the Chinese, and now the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, have been given time to make diplomatic mischief; and the Yugoslav armed forces themselves have had enough time to drive out or kill masses of Albanians, to absorb the worst of NATO's bombing, and then to dig in for a ground attack.

Only Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain continues to urge Clinton to do the right thing. But the president rebuffs the morally and strategically sound pleadings of America's closest European friend in favor of the disingenuous counsel of the Pentagon's generals, who are not so much against using ground forces as they are wary of recommending it to a commander-in-chief whom they neither admire nor trust. This posture is understandable (given Monica) but constitutionally offensive (given the fact that civilians, not uniformed officers, make policy in a democracy).

Of course, when Clinton asks the generals to analyze the ground-troop scenarios, they inevitably provide disastrous worst-case assessments—so no one can ever accuse them later of leading on the civilians. Such military obstructionism is a big part of the explanation for the preposterous failure to use the Apache helicopters General Wes Clark requested almost two months ago. Things might be different if Clinton had the confidence and integrity simply to order the military to come up with, and execute, a winning plan. It might also help if the Republican House weren't so openly and irresponsibly washing its hands of the war, in the hopes of exploiting an American defeat in Campaign 2000. But this is how poisoned both civil-military relations and partisan politics have become in America.

Hence, the air is now thick with rumors of impending high-level resignations at NATO and impending negotiated settlement with Slobodan Milosevic (i.e., defeat). What a disgrace if Bill Clinton were to lose the war in Kosovo because he couldn't even muster the will to win the political and bureaucratic war in Washington. ■

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Jerusalem Dispatch

Bye, Bye Bibi

By HILLEL HALKIN

RIGHT UP TO the end, the passionate Bibi-haters—a category that includes the great majority of Israel's intellectuals, professionals, and media people—were afraid to believe the polls. "He'll pull something from his sleeve at the last minute," they told one another nervously, still traumatized by the 1996 election, in which Netanyahu overcame Shimon Peres's seemingly insurmountable lead at the campaign's start and surged to victory in the wee hours of election night. Netanyahu struck the Israeli elites as a political Houdini who could wriggle through the locks on a sunken career just when you were certain he was drowned.

As things turned out, Bibi's only surprise this week was an unexpectedly prompt and gracious concession speech in which he stepped down as leader of the Likud Party—a sharp contrast to how Peres, a multiple loser, desperately tried to keep control of the Labor Party after his own '96 defeat. But Netanyahu's reputation for electoral magic was greatly exaggerated to begin with. It was less he than the Islamist terrorists of Hamas who beat Peres by blowing up a series of Israeli buses in the run-up to the vote. This time Hamas sat the Israeli elections out.

That there was relatively little Palestinian terror on Netanyahu's three-year watch must go down as one of Bibi's major accomplishments—and one that his opponents, characteristically, tried to overlook. Granted, it was Yasir Arafat who, through a combination of threats, policing, and political cajolery, got Hamas to cut down its violence; but Arafat did this only because the hard-line Netanyahu's 1996 victory caused him belatedly to realize that terror could be a losing game for the Palestinians. Under Peres and Rabin, whose declared policy was, "We will fight terror as if there were no peace and make peace as if there were no terror," giving Hamas a free rein had seemed risk-free.

On the whole, contrary to the impression created by the media, three years of Netanyahu made Israel a more peaceful place politically. For all the charges (which were not without an element of truth) that he inflamed and exploited sectoral and ethnic animosities for political ends, Israel is a less bitterly divided country today than it was between 1993 and 1996. One can argue here, too, of course, that credit for this should not go to Netanyahu. Inasmuch as the pro-peace-process Israeli left is less given to extreme forms of protest than the pro-settler right, a right-leaning government is bound to face a quieter public.

But this, again, misses the point. The most significant political sea change to take place in Israel in the past three years, and Netanyahu's most important—albeit unintended—legacy, is the way that, as a result of his own grudging dealings with the PLO, many, perhaps most, of the right's constituents have come to accept the Oslo agreement as a framework for negotiation, creating a broad consensus in favor of the peace process for the first time. Nothing could have made this clearer than this week's elections, in which not only were the Likud and the National Religious Party, Oslo's most vociferous critics in the past, badly beaten at the polls, but Benny Begin's breakaway National Unity faction, the only party campaigning on an openly anti-Oslo program, received less than three percent of the vote. At long last, it can be said that the public mandate for Oslo that Yitzhak Rabin failed to seek in 1993 has been obtained.

Thus, despite their reputation for having been destructive of the peace process, Netanyahu's three years in office will not be judged that way by history. It is true that he was incapable, by temperament and outlook, of achieving peace. And, given the difficulty of the issues, is it not clear that Ehud Barak will do that much better. But,

EHUD BARAK BY DAVID COWLES

HILLEL HALKIN is a writer and translator living in Israel and a contributing editor of the *Forward*.

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ironic though it may be, the fact is that Barak has been given a promising starting point, thanks to Netanyahu.

IT IS BY now abundantly clear that Israel's electoral law, which uniquely combines features of the presidential and the parliamentary systems, is probably the worst on the books of any democracy. Originally passed as a reform measure on the eve of the 1992 elections and first applied in 1996, it has achieved the exact opposite of what its framers intended. Rather than reducing the proliferation and exorbitant coalition demands of the Knesset's many small parties, it has made them, by establishing separate prime ministerial and parliamentary votes, more numerous and powerful than ever before. Back when it was the parties that elected the prime minister on the Knesset floor, the supporters of Candidate X generally voted for X's party—that is, for Labor or Likud—to ensure that their single ballot was used to back the person of their choice; now that they elect the prime minister directly, they feel free to cast their second ballot for any party they like. The result is a newly elected Knesset with 15 different parties, the largest of which, Labor, has a mere 26 seats out of 120, eight less than it won in 1996, when its candidate for prime minister was defeated, and 18 less than in 1992.

Whether this is more a cause or a consequence of what has been called the "tribalization" of Israeli society is moot; obviously, it is to some degree both. In any case, it is a development that does not bode well for Israel's political life—particularly since the Knesset's role, already weaker than that of Congress or the British Parliament, will be vitiated further as the new prime minister seeks to ignore or bypass it rather than deal with its increasingly unmanageable complexities. As recently as the late '80s, Israel seemed on its way to the kind of two-party system on which long-term political stability depends; now the country is further away than ever from this. Indeed, though in the wake of this week's election there is already talk about repealing the 1992 law, it is probably too late for this, since Labor and Likud, the only parties in the Knesset with an interest in repeal, are no longer a majority there. (They are, in fact, down to 45 seats between them.) Therefore, although on the surface Barak's victory represents a return to the familiar terrain of a Labor-dominated country—which Israel has been for 35 of its 51 years—it is really a slide into something new and potentially chaotic.

But "tribalization" is a slippery concept. Take Shas, the so-called "Sephardic" religious party that was the elections' biggest parliamentary winner, increasing its representation from ten to 17. Drawing on a constituency of Israelis of Middle Eastern descent who harbor a strong resentment toward the country's Ashkenazi elite, and riding the crest of a lengthy corruption trial in which its popular young leader, Aryeh Deri, was recently convicted (or framed, in the eyes of his followers), Shas is an example of a purely ethnic party; yet it was enough to observe its victory celebration on television—in which young men dressed in the white shirts and black suits of Ashkenazi religious garb sang Ashkenazi religious songs and danced Ashkenazi religious dances—to realize that Shas has in fact been a vehicle for the religious Ashkenization of Israel's "Sephardim." Separatism and acculturation have gone hand in hand.

A similar dialectic can be found in the election's "Russian vote." In 1996, the former refusenik hero Natan Sharansky started a sectoral Russian immigrant party that won seven Knesset seats; although it obtained one seat less this time, four more seats went to a new Russian party positioned to the right of it. When it came to the prime ministerial vote, however, the Russian immigrants showed a different pattern, moving leftward in significant numbers. Most of these Russians arrived from the ex-Soviet Union with right-wing views—a fusion of anti-communism and dismissive Russian attitudes toward non-European minorities. On the other hand, the Israeli economic and intellectual elite that the Russians aspire to join has left-of-center voting habits. Thus, what one is looking at beneath the assertion of Russian identity in these most recent elections, it would seem, is an underlying process of Israelification.

It is a kind of Israelification, too, that accounts for much of the growing tension between ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews, whose anti-Orthodox backlash helped bring Barak to power this week. Indeed, while the secular do not see it this way, the growing political aggressiveness of the ultra-Orthodox in recent years, far from representing an unequivocal rejection of Israeli society, stems from a growing sense of being part of that society and wanting a full share of its political benefits and entitlements. Once, the ultra-Orthodox viewed the Jewish state as a Zionist creation that they lived in but were not part of. Today, their changed perspective facilitated by an era of post-Zionism, they tend to consider it theirs, too.

EHUD BARAK, THEN, has been elected prime minister of a country that is moving in different, and even contradictory, directions; simply mapping them, let alone navigating them, is not easy. Barak's very first task, the construction of a parliamentary coalition, will involve a complex assessment of priorities.

The secular public that elected Barak did so on the basis of two issues: the renewal of the peace process, stalled under Netanyahu, and a revision of secular-religious relations. The latter agenda includes slashing or eliminating public subsidies for religious education, housing, and institutions; revoking the blanket exemption on the military conscription of yeshiva students; and ending the Orthodox monopoly on performing marriages and divorces. In terms of coalition politics, however, these two goals might not be compatible. If Barak seeks to build his coalition around Shas, a party sufficiently dovish to accept meaningful concessions to the Palestinians, he can hardly move to change the religious status quo; if he builds his coalition around the secular Likud, his hands might be tied on the peace process. And, if he tries to do without both of these parties, he will be left with a precarious majority in the Knesset, deprived of the wide public base that he seems determined to have.

For the moment, that base exists less in the statistical sense (although Barak won 56 percent of the combined Jewish-Arab vote, he received only 51.5 percent among Jews) than as

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a matter of mood. During his three years in office, Netanyahu managed to make many enemies and few friends. A man of undoubted intelligence but with a manipulative streak so predominant that it can be described only as a moral flaw, he alienated not only many of the world's leaders, from President Clinton on down, but most of his domestic political allies. It was startling to see, as he stepped up to make his concession speech on Monday night, how, apart from Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, his old mentor Moshe Arens, and the minister of tourism, there was no one from the Likud at his side. Not even his most outspoken backers seemed very sorry to see him go. This, too, was an ironic way in which he passed on to Ehud Barak a more unified country than the one he inherited. ■

The passing of ungendered journalism.

Sisterhood Is Weak

By NAOMI SCHAEFER

LIKE MOST COLUMNISTS, Meg Greenfield, who passed away on May 13 after 20 years as *The Washington Post*'s editorial page editor, had her flaws. Her moralizing mingled uneasily with her irony; she was a bit too free with the first-person pronoun. Still, her death represents a loss for certain values of journalism. Greenfield was a woman who, though definitely a member of the minority gender during her 31 years at the male-dominated *Washington Post*, quite consciously never used her perch on the op-ed page "to strike a blow for sisterhood," as she once told an interviewer. She supported "what's serious about the feminist movement" but resisted, the *Post*'s obituary noted, "suggestions that there is a woman's perspective on general issues." Greenfield stood for old-fashioned, ungendered journalism against the fashionable view that, for female opinion writers, politics is significant only if it is also personal.

Back in October 1986, for example, Greenfield visited China, where she reported on the legacy of "a violent, mindless Mao-encouraged brutishness," as she called it: "Person after person that you meet—a mayor, a factory manager, a university president, a writer—will tell you with a small, rueful smile, 'Oh, yes, I went to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution,' meaning that he or she was subjected to extremes of privation and degradation we can hardly imagine." The next year, Anna Quindlen made a similar journey to the Soviet Union. In an article about her visit that she later wrote for *The New York Times*, she focused not on the horrible repression the Russian people suffered under Soviet communism. Instead, Quindlen worried about the scarcity of contraception, the old carrots sold at the markets, the future of "women's liberation," and "husbands who watched sports events and left wives all the work." She visited totalitarianism and saw only patriarchy.

Quindlen, of course, has left journalism for the world of fiction, but her successors carry on. Ellen Goodman at *The Boston Globe* is constantly writing about what she calls "the pan-female agreement," as if there were a list of issues on which all women can and should agree—the Pill, gender bias, abortion, the end of Radcliffe, Barbie. Of 16 columns in the past two months, only a few have not been about women. Even on those occasions when Goodman touches on other subjects, it's usually with the same agenda in mind—when she wrote about human rights abuses in Afghanistan, for instance, it was only to protest the Taliban government's brutal treatment of women.

Something else Meg Greenfield rarely did was turn her column into a confessional of sisterly soul-searching; she did not act as if every personal experience had some universal import. Here, she set herself apart not just from modern liberal female pundits but, increasingly, from conservative ones, as well. Katie Roiphe has practically made a career (two books and a number of articles) recounting the sexually permissive atmosphere of her years at Harvard and what they tell us about the presence of date rape on campus. "People have asked me if I have ever been date raped," she writes. "And thinking back on complicated nights, on too many glasses of wine, on strange and familiar beds, I would have to say yes. With such a sweeping definition of rape, I wonder how many people there are, male or female, who haven't been date raped at one point or another."

Contrast that with a 1991 Greenfield column making the same general point—in a less titillating but arguably more substantive way: "Our cultural tradition has at times really exalted rape in myth, romance, and legend, and generations of women were raised to believe that something bordering on it was either *(a)* acceptable or *(b)* the only way for a proper, reputation-regarding female to acquiesce in sexual activity. So the establishment of facts and guilt or innocence becomes all the more difficult."

Danielle Crittenden made a splash with articles and a book, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us*, telling women how much easier life is for women who marry and have children at a young age. It doesn't offer much sociological research, but who needs facts when you can cite motherly instinct and stories from friends? In *A Return to Modesty*, Wendy Shalit offers a provocative argument about the need for more traditional male-female interaction—then makes her point by recounting a near-fling with a debate camp counselor: "[T]he more he stroked my hair, the queerer I felt." After leaving the room, Shalit says she took a "long, guilty shower." Guilty because "from so little I had felt so much." Forget women's perspectives. This is just *one woman's* perspective.

There is, as always, one obvious attraction for this kind of journalism—the personal is a lot easier to write about than the political. Jim Hoagland has issued the definitive opinion on Yugoslavia; George Will has covered the designated-hitter rule. So for the woman who wants to analyze the latest

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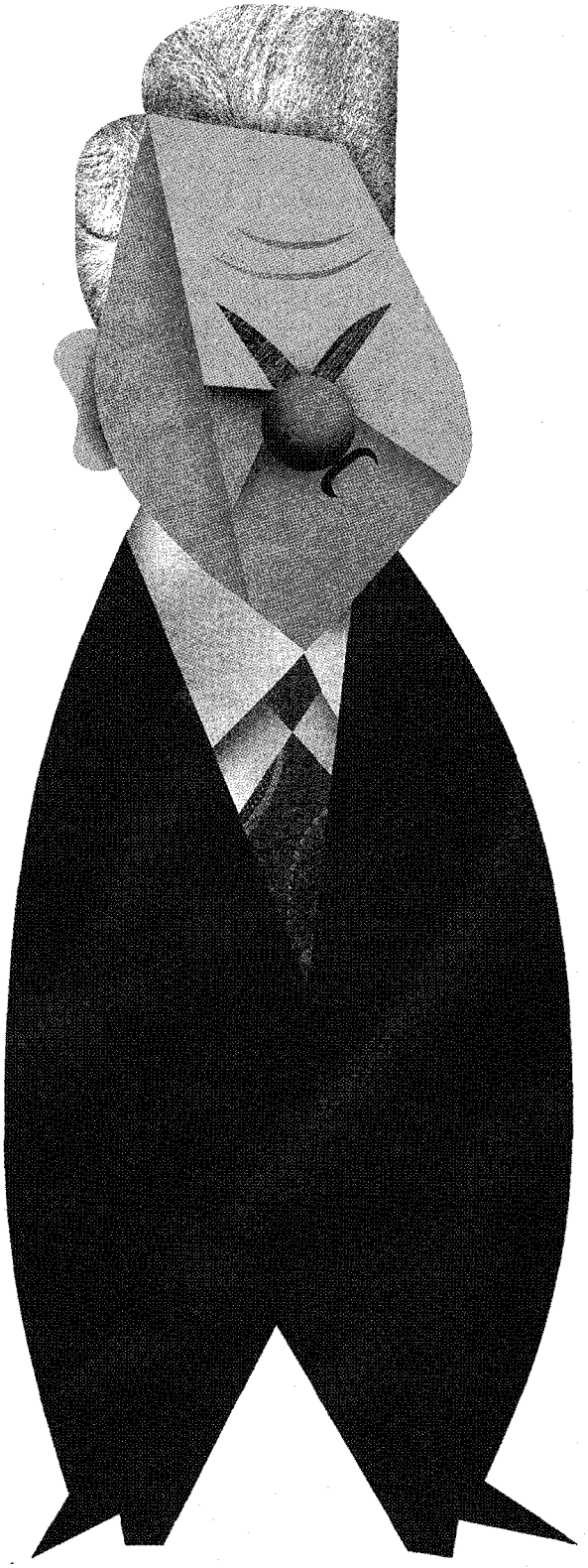
financial crisis in Thailand—but doesn't actually know much about it—there are only two options: engage in painstaking research or serve up a tender solipsistic anecdote on some other subject.

Some writers, to be sure, buck the trend. When Maureen Dowd replaced Quindlen on the *Times* op-ed page in 1995, she was taken to task for not meditating sufficiently on the plight of the sisterhood. "Dowd appears to have no interest in addressing women's rights," Susan Faludi complained in *The Nation*, "and she seems only to write about individual women when she can make fun of them." In her defense, Andrew Rosenthal, the *Times*' Washington editor at the time, explained, "You'll get her viewpoint ... but you won't find out how her inner child feels about Bosnia." Greenfield couldn't have said it better herself. ■

Russia's oligarchs stage a comeback.

As the Kremlin Turns

By JACOB HEILBRUNN



BORIS YELTSIN BY DAVID COWLES

EVER SINCE THE collapse of the Soviet Union, two Western camps have emerged to argue about the Russian future. The first camp, led by Zbigniew Brzezinski, emphasizes the immutable character of an authoritarian Russian political culture. The other camp, championed by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, takes a more upbeat view: no matter how bumpy the Russian road to democracy may be at any given moment, the country is still headed in that direction.

The tumultuous political changes in Russia a week ago gave a bit of sustenance to both camps. When Boris Yeltsin fired Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, *The Economist* expressed the bleak view: "[C]onfusion—and the possibility even of bloodshed and the demise of Russia's frail democracy—are back with a vengeance." But, now that Yeltsin has exposed the Duma's threat to impeach him as empty and his candidate to replace Primakov as prime minister, Sergei Stepashin, has been approved by the Duma, it's the optimists' turn. "GOOD NEWS FOR THE PRO-WESTERNERS?" asked the May 24 *Newsweek*. The Carnegie Endowment's Anders Aslund, who has been closely associated with Russian economic reform efforts, argues that Yeltsin's peaceful victory over the Duma's push for impeachment showed that Russia has passed a major constitutional test.

But what if neither camp has it right? Instead of Russia being poised between old-style Soviet authoritarianism and full-fledged democracy, the events of the past week may end up ratifying the power, not of a reform movement, but of a group of industrial oligarchs who have selectively applied economic reforms in order to enhance their own power. The Communists most likely had their last hurrah in attempting to impeach Yeltsin. But this only means that the country confronts another problem: Russia may be mutating into a kind of hybrid democratic state that has free elections but remains under the control of a corrupt oligarchic industrial elite—something resembling what Foreign Affairs editor Fareed Zakaria has identified as "illiberal democracy."

Like Stepashin, the leading Russian "reformers" hail from

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St. Petersburg, where they formed a clique headed by politician Anatoly Chubais, now head of the multibillion-dollar Unified Energy Systems corporation. In the early years of Yeltsin's presidency, Chubais assembled what his friend Deputy Treasury Secretary Larry Summers called a "dream team" to handle most of the Western aid flowing into Russia. But the Chubais team ended up supervising rigged privatization schemes that benefited themselves rather than the country; according to Janine R. Wedel's book Collision and Collusion, the reformers "obstructed reform when such initiatives originated outside their own group or when the initiatives were perceived as conflicting with [their] agenda." The reign of this clan came, or seemed to come, to a close with the economic crash in August and Yeltsin's removal of Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko.

WITH THE INSTALLATION of Yevgeny Primakov as prime minister, Yeltsin seemed to be moving back toward a Soviet-style command economy. At a minimum, the selling off of the state to a few wealthy entrepreneurs came to a grinding halt. Furthermore, Primakov actually attempted to combat economic corruption. In the process, he did at least two things that got him into hot water with Yeltsin: he permitted prosecutors to investigate the Kremlin's property-management company, and he allowed them to issue an arrest warrant for tycoon Boris Berezovsky.

These developments did not sit well with business leaders such as Chubais and Berezovsky. Although the two men had fought each other in a media war in 1997, it turned out that they hated Primakov more than they hated each other. (The weekly *Kommersant Vlast* says that Chubais has even pressed the Kremlin to immediately jail Yuri Skuratov, the state prosecutor investigating Berezovsky.) The reform camp was also worried that the Communists might eventually gain power under Primakov, and that this might lead to an expropriation of the oligarchs' assets. And Yeltsin, of course, was infuriated by Primakov's popularity: "The radical reformers," says Dimitri Simes of the Nixon Center, "were adding poison to Yeltsin's well-known predisposition not to have anyone overshadow him."

Stepashin emerged as an attractive replacement. He first drew the reformers' attention when, as interior minister, he ignored an arrest warrant for Berezovsky issued by Skuratov. And Chubais, who was closeted with Yeltsin just prior to Primakov's sacking, pushed for Stepashin. "Yeltsin has a strong personal affinity for the young reformers, especially Chubais," observes Andrea Rutherford, an investment banker at Moscow brokerage firm Brunswick Warburg. Of course, the members of the old reform elite most likely won't officially make it back into Stepashin's Cabinet since he is pushing for a centrist government, but they may have something more important than the trappings of office—Yeltsin's ear. Meanwhile, Berezovsky's puppet Nikolai Aksyonenko, formerly railways minister, has now been named first deputy prime minister. Thus, as Andrei Zolotov Jr. cogently observed in the May 14 *Moscow Times*, "The same group of oligarchs and political operatives who came together to secure Yeltsin's reelection in 1996—and then divided up the Cabinet portfolios and offices in the presidential administration, oil companies, and television frequencies—are back in action."

Where does this leave the United States? With a cautious government in charge in Russia and the oligarchs given a free hand, the chance of Russia adopting any real economic reform is slim—and the likelihood that it will combat the massive corruption that has infected the political class is even slimmer. Having loaned billions to Russia only to see those sums funneled into Swiss bank accounts, Western bankers and government officials have finally become a bit warier about extending new credits to the Kremlin. But the impulse in the United States and in Europe to appease Russia can't be ignored, either. It's not unlikely that, in order to gain Russian cooperation in the Balkans, the Clinton administration will lean on the IMF to approve new loans, or at least to forgive debts on the old ones.

Indeed, with the Clinton administration desperate to salvage something from the relationship it has cultivated with Russia, the firing of Primakov and the installation of a nominally centrist Cabinet will probably heighten its ardor to assist Russia. True, Stepashin is already calling on the Duma to pass fiscal austerity measures—measures the IMF insists upon before it will release $4.5 billion in credits. But in order to be a successful prime minister he will have to establish a Cabinet that is acceptable to the Communist-dominated Duma. The Clinton administration would do well to realize that, whatever Russian government is appointed, the mess in Moscow is not about to go away. The Communists may be fading into history, but the oligarchs surely are not. ■

Union and man at Yale.

Class Struggle

By TYCE PALMAFFY

IN 1992, JOSHUA ROWLAND entered Yale's doctoral English program with dreams of becoming a professor of nineteenth-century American literature. But now, just on the verge of earning his Ph.D., Rowland has decided to forgo a career in academia to attend law school—with hopes of becoming a labor lawyer. "I had wanted to be one of them," Rowland laments, speaking about his professors, "but collegiality is a total myth; it's a sham."

Rowland's bitterness—and change of plans—stems from the battle he and a number of other Yale graduate students have waged for nearly a decade as members of the Graduate Employees and Students Organization (GESO), a labor union seeking to represent Yale's graduate students, whom the university relies on to help teach undergraduate classes, in negotiations with the university. Yale has stead-

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fastly refused to recognize GESO, insisting that graduate students who serve as teaching assistants are not employees but rather students receiving training for their future careers as professors.

This showdown has had all the trappings of a typical labor-management conflict. Rhetorical posturing, work stoppages, and court battles are now as much a part of graduate school life at Yale as oral exams and dissertations. But the Yale dispute is notable not only for its nastiness. It also highlights academia's profound transformation over the past three decades—and the unstable situation that this transformation has created. As universities have downsized and placed freezes on hiring, they have relied increasingly on graduate students as a source of inexpensive labor. Now many graduate students want either the benefits accorded to full employees or for universities like Yale to recommit themselves to faculty hiring. How Yale addresses their demands will help set the standard for other schools to follow and ultimately will attest either to academia's imagination or to its capacity for self-delusion.

UNIONIZATION DRIVES AMONG graduate students are nothing new. In 1969, the University of Wisconsin became the first university to recognize its graduate students' union; other large state universities—including the University of Michigan, the University of Iowa, and the University of Florida—have since followed suit. And, in March, nearly 16 years after graduate students first began agitating at U.C. Berkeley, the University of California finally agreed to respect the results of graduate student union elections. If, as expected, students at all eight U.C. campuses vote for representation—students at UCLA and Berkeley have already voted to be represented by local affiliates of the United Auto Workers—the number of universities with graduate student labor unions will climb to 26 nationwide.

But Yale is unique in that, if its graduate students were to unionize, they would be the first to do so at a private university. Many public universities are governed by state labor laws that make it easier for public employees to unionize, whereas private universities fall under the aegis of the federal National Labor Relations Act. In a series of decisions during the '70s, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that students who perform work as part of their education are not employees as defined by the act and thus do not have a right to unionize. These decisions covered both teaching and research assistants and medical students who gain clinical experience as residents and interns.

Since legal precedent is on Yale's side, the members of GESO have tried for years to bully the administration into "voluntarily" recognizing GESO as a labor union. This strategy, which included a few brief strikes during the early '90s, reached its crescendo in December 1995. That was when GESO, in a desperate bid for recognition, orchestrated a "grade strike" in which teaching assistants proctored and graded exams but refused to turn in the grades at the end of the semester.

The strike quickly fizzled after Yale's faculty and administration threatened the striking students with punishments ranging from the loss of their spring teaching assignments to disapproving letters of recommendation. GESO, however, kept Yale in the spotlight by filing a complaint with the NLRB. The NLRB's general counsel then charged the university with the unfair labor practice of punishing students for protected union activity. The judge in the case eventually sided with Yale on a technicality—striking students had continued to perform some of their teaching responsibilities, thereby making their actions an unprotected "partial strike"—but both he and the NLRB's general counsel expressed sympathy for the idea that teaching assistants were employees with a right to unionize, signaling a possible shift in the labor board's thinking. The general counsel has appealed the decision to the five-member NLRB.

All in all, the strike was a bit premature, as GESO still has more than a few opponents among those it purports to represent. Some graduate students tend to view GESO members as nothing more than ungrateful brats who have created a permanent culture of complaint on campus. David Diaz, then a master's student in history, wrote in *The Yale Herald* in 1995 that, as far as GESO is concerned, graduate students are "as oppressed as prison laborers in China and as exploited as whores in Bangkok.... Ritual torture must be a warm day in spring compared to the pace of graduate work at Yale." John Gehman, a graduate student in chemistry who helped start an opposition group called GASO (pronounced "gas-oh," as in blowing hot air), says that GESO supporters "are trying to find somebody else to blame for their feeling that they've made a bad decision."

But, like Gehman, many of GESO's opponents are in the hard sciences, where students receive relatively generous annual stipends of $15,000 to $16,000 because of the government research dollars that flow through their departments. For them, a union doesn't seem all that necessary. In the humanities and social sciences, where the majority of GESO supporters reside, students are given an $11,000 stipend, which doesn't even cover the cost of living in New Haven for the nine-month school year. Making matters worse, these students' job prospects are decidedly more grim than those of their hard-science counterparts. It used to be that they could count on finding jobs and leaving New Haven after four or five years of graduate school, even if they hadn't yet completed their dissertations. But today, as Yale President Richard Levin told the Association of Yale Alumni in 1997, "Good jobs are scarce, and, rather than take a job outside the academy, students choose to stay and seek additional support through teaching fellowships into years six, seven, and eight."

YALE'S MAIN ARGUMENT against GESO is that a union would corrupt the special mentoring relationship between students and the faculty. Yale administrators and faculty members contend that unionization will impose an industrial, adversarial, time-clock model on their flexible, collegial, ad hoc system. "The life of the mind is not a nine-to-five job," says political science Professor Steven Smith.

But unionization would not fundamentally alter the relationship graduate students already have with their profes-

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sors. It would merely change the relationship students have with the administration—which mainly uses the students as de facto employees, ones without any say in the terms of their employment at that. In March, GESO released a study, called "Casual in Blue," which found that graduate students and non-tenure-track faculty perform 70 percent of the total number of hours of undergraduate education provided at Yale; in the history and chemistry departments, professors give out less than ten percent of the grades. This isn't terribly surprising when you consider that, between 1980 and 1997, the number of tenure-track faculty members at Yale declined from 688 to 653. Meanwhile, the number of teaching assistants rose from 778 to more than 1,000 during a period when student enrollment stayed constant.

GESO calls this substitution of grad students and adjunct professors for tenure-track faculty the "casualization" of academic labor. In this vein it argues that unionization is not just about higher pay and better benefits for teaching assistants but also about the salvation of academia itself. GESO contends that unionization, by making it more expensive to buy the labor of graduate students, will reduce the incentives to use graduate students as teaching assistants in lieu of hiring more junior faculty. GESO also sees itself as a countervailing force, as a way to put decision-making back into the hands of educators instead of administrators who care only about the "bottom line." "The end goal is to have a mobilized, organized workforce of teachers who will stand up to the administration and hold them accountable," says Antony Dugdale, a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy and religious studies and a former chairman of GESO. "Then Yale will address our demands."

BUT ARE THOSE demands reasonable? While GESO members are right to note the idealized and unrealistic nature of Yale's portrait of academia, they're also susceptible to their own delusions of class struggle. According to Ivana Krajcinovic, an early member of GESO who earned her Ph.D. in economics from Yale in 1993 and who now organizes hotel and restaurant employees in California, "The issues are all the same" between graduate students and the service industry workers, on whose behalf she now fights. "When you really break it down," she says, "we had miserable wages, no benefits; we didn't have a voice, no rules about workloads, no power. It's not any different from any other workplace." Yale's clerical and technical workers—who won recognition for their union after a period of extremely tense labor relations during the mid-'80s—seem to agree, having lent organizational and monetary support to GESO. And, when Scholars, Artists, and Writers for Social Justice (SAWSJ, pronounced "sausage") held a labor teach-in at Yale in April, Linda Chavez-Thompson, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, came to label Yale a "sweatshop."

Yet, while GESO members continue to talk of the university's "arrogance" and "exploitation" and their decade-long "struggle," practically every graduate student enters Yale with a commitment of full funding for at least four and often five tuition-free years.

And, modest as the grad students' circumstances may be, especially since they cannot realistically work a second job during the school year, $11,000 is hardly a sweatshop wage when you consider that the students also get free health insurance to work 20 hours a week during two vacation-filled semesters. Extrapolated to a full-time, yearlong, 40-hour-a-week job, Yale graduate students would earn close to $38,000 a year—and that's not even counting the free tuition.

The problem with GESO is that unionization has now become a goal unto itself—motivated as much by ideology as career angst—when it should be a means to an end. Although Susan Hockfield, who took over as dean of the graduate school last summer, has committed to devote millions more dollars to stipends and health care benefits and seems eager to do more, GESO continues to engage in contentious face-offs instead of grasping the olive branch.

Ultimately, the solution to this conflict may lie within Yale's thus far superficial promise of an apprenticeship program. In a true apprenticeship, there is a ladder in which the apprentice gains greater and greater responsibilities until he masters his craft. But most teaching assistants at Yale never move beyond running a discussion section for a professor's class, oftentimes serving as a teaching assistant for the same class more than once. Wouldn't it be better if Yale showed its commitment to teaching by designing an apprenticeship ladder for graduate students on which they would move from grading papers to running discussion sections to developing their own classes? Along the way, they could receive training from top professors on how to build a syllabus and deliver a captivating lecture. Yale could even bolster this shift toward putting teaching first by making a professor's teaching of both undergraduates and graduates a significant part of his or her tenure evaluation. In the end, Yale administrators can view GESO as a mere nuisance or as an opportunity to revolutionize graduate education. The choice is ultimately theirs. ■

Should an economist be in charge of the economy?

Summers's Day

By JOHN B. JUDIS

"THE CURRENT U.S. RECOVERY has now celebrated its seventh birthday.... Just as at the end of the 1960s, sustained growth has led people to believe it can continue indefinitely.... The increasingly optimistic tide of opinion extends beyond the near-term outlook to relative serenity about the budget and trade deficits and America's competitive prospects. The optimists could be right, as they have been in the recent past. But the American economic performance faces dangers over all horizons." So warned Harvard economist Lawrence Sum-

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mers in a January 1990 column for the *Financial Times*. Barely six months later, the United States was edging toward a recession.

Summers, who is likely to be confirmed to succeed Robert Rubin as secretary of the Treasury, could describe the present climate of opinion in very similar terms. As the Dow heads toward 12,000, some stockbrokers and investment bankers voice unbounded optimism about America's economic outlook. "Today's economic story," investment analyst and former Reagan budget official Lawrence Kudlow wrote in *The Washington Times*, "is hitting on all cylinders." Yet, just as in January 1990, there are dangers looming on the horizon—from Wall Street to Tokyo to Sao Paulo to Belgrade. These dangers might not plunge the United States into a recession, but, at the least, they could test Summers's ingenuity and resolve over the next 18 months.

Summers will also confront a challenge to his considerable conceptual resources. Over the past decade, the American and world economies have changed in ways that few economists, including Summers, had anticipated. In the 1990s, the United States has defied the predicted tradeoff between inflation and employment, leaving it without an accepted fiscal and monetary strategy. Internationally, the integration of financial markets promoted by the U.S. government and the IMF has created instability in Asia and Latin America. Part of what Summers will have to do is bring policymaking in line with these new domestic and international realities.

In the U.S., Summers will have to face an expansion driven primarily by skyrocketing increases in stock prices, which have fueled an increase in domestic consumption. Stocks, buoyed by money coming into the U.S., are selling at extraordinarily high price-to-earnings ratios—the ratio between a company's stock price and the portion of its earnings claimed by each share. The 50-year average P/E from 1940 to 1990 was 14. The average is now 35, and some Internet stocks boast P/E ratios above 100. The Internet auctioneer eBay has had a P/E of nearly 3,000. Some of these stocks may enjoy continued growth, but others could suffer from a sudden jolt.

A host of factors could cause stock prices to fall or could precipitate an economic slowdown on their own. An unexpected burst of inflation could raise the specter of higher interest rates, which would depress stock prices and also discourage investment. After the Labor Department released the consumer price index for April, showing that prices had risen 0.7 percent, the largest increase since October 1990, the Dow Jones fell almost 200 points. The increase in prices was probably transitory, the result of rising gasoline prices brought on by the Balkan war and a new OPEC agreement, but, if it recurs, it could lead the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates. The rate of profit in manufacturing, which soared from 1992 to 1997, has also begun to decline—from six percent after taxes in 1997 to 5.1 percent in 1998. That, too, could discourage firms from investing and could depress growth.

And the international economy remains in turmoil—the victim since December 1994 of one currency crisis after another, from the Tequila crisis in Mexico and Argentina in 1994–95 to the Asian flu of 1997 to the near-collapse last fall of Long-Term Capital Management, the multibillion-dollar hedge fund. Some economists now argue that the danger has passed, but there are reasons to believe that it has not. For one thing, the world economy has still not overcome an underlying cause of the Asian crisis—the overcapacity relative to demand that by 1997 had reduced profit margins to less than one percent in Asia. As Kenneth Courtis, the chief economist for Deutsche Bank in Asia, writes in his latest bank newsletter: "At its core, the global emerging markets crisis is a crisis of overinvestment. Indeed, that is one of the principal characteristics of the world economy today. From steel slabs to cars, from wood chips to computer chips, from toothpicks to tooth brushes, we have the capacity to produce far more than we currently consume."

In addition, Japan, the world's second-largest economy, remains deeply mired in recession, making it extremely difficult for the rest of Asia to recover and contributing to a perilous relationship between the United States and the Asian economy, in

LAWRENCE SUMMERS BY DAVID COWLES

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which the United States provides the bulk of consumer demand for Asian goods, while Japan finances our burgeoning trade deficit. If any link in this chain is broken—if Japanese companies start converting their dollars to yen, if East Asia suffers another round of currency crises, or if American companies stop making new investments—American policymakers could once again find themselves staring a new crisis in the face. Says former Tokyo banker Taggart Murphy, the author of *The Weight of the Yen*, "The next shock could easily overwhelm the combined efforts of Tokyo and Washington to cope."

SUMMERS, OF COURSE, will have to cope with each of these dangers, but, as he does so, he will not be able to draw on an accepted fiscal and monetary strategy. As children of the Keynesian revolution, Rubin and Summers believed that in the absence of "external shocks," such as the OPEC boycott of 1973, correct policymaking could prolong economic expansions indefinitely. "It's very important to remember that, historically, expansions have not died of old age. They have died when specific policy errors were made, usually an overheating of the economy that led to a revival of inflation," Summers told the *Los Angeles Times* last year. But, in considering how to prolong expansions, Rubin and Summers have relied on a policy approach and a theory of the business cycle that may have become obsolete.

Both men believe that, to avoid recessions, fiscal and monetary policy have to respect the Phillips curve, which holds that a drop in unemployment is inversely correlated with a rise in inflation, and vice versa. Correct policy has consisted of discovering the NAIRU, or non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment, at which any further increase in employment would cause an increase in inflation. In the late '70s, policymakers believed the NAIRU was 7.25 percent. By the early '90s, when Bill Clinton took office, they thought it was 6.0 percent, and, by the 1996 election, they were conceding it could be as low as 5.5 percent. But the unexpected occurred. Inflation and unemployment fell together over the next several years, defying the Phillips curve. In 1996, unemployment averaged 5.4 percent, and inflation 3.0 percent, while, in the twelve months from April 1998 to April 1999, unemployment averaged 4.4 percent and inflation 2.3 percent, even allowing for April's price increases.

Some economists believed prices were being held down by an unusual combination of competition from abroad, the lack of pressure for higher wages from organized labor at home, and falling raw-material prices. But other economists advanced a theory of a "new economy." They held that, in addition to these factors, dramatic increases in productivity, resulting from the introduction of information technology, were driving down prices, even as real wages began to increase. When their critics pointed out that productivity had not significantly increased during the mid-'90s from its pattern in the prior two decades, proponents of the new theory attacked the accuracy of the economic measurements. But, in 1996, publicly measured productivity suddenly began rising. It climbed by 2.8 percent in 1996, 2.5 percent in 1997, and 3.0 percent in 1998. During the first quarter of 1999, it rose 4.0 percent. Compare that with an average annual increase of 1.1 percent from 1973 to 1989.

Some of the more evangelical advocates of the new economy predicted that the rise in productivity would by itself eliminate future recessions, but *Business Week*'s Michael Mandel, the theory's best-known proponent, has argued more modestly that it would change the nature of the business cycle. The economy would operate as it did in the 1920s rather than in the 1980s, he said. Recessions would be precipitated by the economy's capacity to produce outrunning its ability to purchase and consume. The warning sign would not necessarily be inflation, but deflation, as companies were forced to sell their goods at fire-sale prices.

The implications for economic policy are far-reaching. According to the Phillips curve theory, the Federal Reserve and the federal government are supposed to anticipate rises in inflation by curbing public spending and raising interest rates as unemployment drops to the level of the NAIRU, even if prices have not yet begun accelerating. Thus, in February 1994, with unemployment still above six percent, Alan Greenspan and the Fed raised interest rates because they feared future inflation. According to the theory of the new economy, the Fed and the government are supposed to be extremely hesitant to raise interest rates and reduce spending. Their main priority should be using increases in spending and the reduction in interest rates to increase consumer demand in the face of global overcapacity and deflation.

ACCORDING TO ADMINISTRATION sources, Rubin never accepted the theory of the new economy. Like the veteran Wall Street bond underwriter he is, he continued to watch out for signs of inflation. Of course, with April's inflation figures, Rubin could turn out to have been right all along, although it would be hard to explain entirely the spectacular rise in productivity coming late, rather than early, into a recovery. Greenspan, although not necessarily all his board members, has become a convert to the new economy theory. Last year, to counter the threat of worldwide deflation, Greenspan lowered interest rates three times—an action that he would not have contemplated in 1994. Summers, once skeptical, is now taking the new economy theory more seriously. "New developments in information technology are very important, and there's no question we seem to be in a period when normal rates of unemployment have fallen and normal rates of growth have risen," he told an interviewer last February. As the Fed's wary response to April's inflation makes clear, Summers and Greenspan could face a critical choice in coming months: whether to devise a new strategy to address new kinds of instability or whether to return to the old strategy based on the Phillips curve.

Summers also faces the daunting task of developing a theory and policy to address the currency crises of the '90s. Earlier, Rubin and Summers both accepted the assumption, adopted during the Reagan administration, that the best way to promote growth in developing nations was to get them to liberalize their financial practices—to open their banking and insurance sectors to foreign takeovers and to remove controls on the export and import of capital. With

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the help of the American-controlled IMF, they succeeded in getting many countries to adopt financial liberalization, but, in doing so, they also made them more vulnerable to currency speculators who, believing that a country's currency was about to decline, created a self-fulfilling prophecy by bidding it down. When countries found their currencies under attack, Rubin, Summers, and the IMF proposed that they defend them by raising interest rates, raising taxes, and reducing government spending. Such measures, they argued, would restore investors' confidence in the country's currency and revive investment and growth.

When Thailand, South Korea, and Indonesia found their currencies under attack in 1997, they turned to the United States and the IMF for help. Following Rubin and Summers's advice, the IMF made its help conditional on these countries' raising interest rates and cutting spending. Such a strategy ignored the underlying causes of their economies' weakness—the overcapacity that plagued Asian economies and had been aggravated by China's export push and by competition from the cheaper yen. Instead of leading to instant recovery, as the IMF promised, these measures precipitated a deep recession that threatened to engulf the entire region.

In response to the growing crisis in Asia, a group of economists, including Joseph Stiglitz of the World Bank, Paul Krugman of MIT, Dani Rodrik and Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard, and John Eatwell of Cambridge University, put forward a different approach to the global economy. They rejected financial liberalization as an end in itself and as a sure means to prosperity. (Rodrik and Eatwell have even contended that, by creating uncertainty and instability, liberalization hampered growth.) Pointing to the success of capital controls by Western Europe and Japan after World War II, this group of economists has argued that developing countries should be able to use these controls to insulate their economies temporarily against speculation, so that they could do what developed nations do in the face of similar crises—let their currencies fall gradually, while attempting to raise consumer demand and encourage domestic investment. They defended Malaysia's imposition of controls in September 1998. And they also urged the creation of "speed bumps" to discourage currency speculation. Krugman, for instance, advocated a tax on international currency transactions. Because these transactions are based on very narrow profit margins, even a tiny tax would act as a deterrent without discouraging legitimate currency transactions. This approach found widespread support among public officials in Japan, East Asia, and Western Europe.

The U.S. Treasury and the IMF finally relented last year and softened their conditions for aid, which helped some of the Asian countries begin a slow recovery, but they did not alter their basic approach. Rubin and Summers denounced Malaysia (even though its controls have spurred a modest recovery), and, at international gatherings, they have denounced proposals for new national and international regulation. Most recently, at this month's meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Malaysia, Summers rejected Japanese and Malaysian proposals to regulate hedge funds like Long-Term Capital Management that specialize in currency speculation.

Yet economists who have talked privately with Summers believe that he is more open to international financial regulation and capital controls than Rubin was. Said one such economist, "I do not anticipate that Larry will make any moves early on. But I think he has a much more nuanced—read cautious—view of the workings of international capital markets than Rubin, so I would not be surprised if some changes were made in the U.S. approach eventually."

In the wake of Rubin's resignation and his own nomination, Summers was frequently compared unfavorably with his boss. He was seen to lack Rubin's even temperament, his modesty, and his diplomatic skills. Indeed, Summers will have difficulty doing some things that came easily to Rubin. He will lack Rubin's authority and prestige among American and foreign bankers and his clout in the White House, which was based not only on his relationship with Clinton but on his being able to command the loyalty of protégés like National Economic Council Director Gene Sperling. But, as this account of their approaches to the new economy and the globalization suggests, Summers may have certain advantages over Rubin that could serve him well in the next 18 months and perhaps in a new Democratic administration in 2001.

Rubin's approach to the economy was born out of his years as a trader on Wall Street. He judged policies according to their effect on business confidence. Domestically, he deferred to Wall Street's frequently irrational fears of inflation. Internationally, he deferred to what Paul Krugman has called the "confidence game" practiced on developing countries by currency speculators (see Paul Krugman, "The Confidence Game," TNR, October 5, 1998). And he was adamant in rejecting new regulations aimed at curbing speculation at home and internationally.

Summers is an economist rather than a banker. His mentality is far more experimental and pragmatic than Rubin's. While he has accepted the conventional IMF theory of international finance, he has not necessarily given precedence in his economic calculations to business confidence. Unlike Rubin, Summers also has had no particular allegiance to Wall Street or to corporate CEOs. At the end of the '80s, for instance, while Rubin was leading a Wall Street coalition against transaction taxes on short-term speculation, Summers was one of its main academic proponents. Summers also flirted with heresy by proposing new rules governing corporate directors. If anything, he has been faulted for being too ready to court new approaches.

Rubin's approach was probably essential to a Democratic administration that needed to overcome the distrust of Wall Street in order to govern effectively. Rubin's cordial relationship with Greenspan was also an important ingredient in the economic recovery that took place in the mid-'90s. But Summers's more pragmatic and conceptual approach to policymaking may prove better suited to the coming economic climate, as the Clinton administration and the Treasury Department attempt to come to terms with the new world of Amazon.com and Malaysian capital controls. ■

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Why Hillary-for-Senate would hurt the Democrats.

The Wrong Race

By MICHELLE COTTLE

"DO YOU THINK TONIGHT'S THE night?" I've been expecting this question all evening, but the man's low, teasing voice nonetheless causes me to catch my breath. He stands only inches from me, a wicked gleam in his eye, a gentle smile of anticipation and expectation on his lips. The hour is late, and in my heart I know that he deserves an answer. After all, we are here, in a posh Manhattan hotel. The wine has been poured, the lights are low, and soft music perfumes the room around us. But, after a pregnant pause, I face the fact that I cannot give the gentleman what he wants.

I simply have no idea when Hillary Clinton will announce her run for Senate.

Sure. Sure. It's not a done deal yet. There's still the possibility that the first lady will decline to enter the New York race, opting instead to spend her post-White House years as head of a charity, a university, or possibly the World Bank. But, more and more these days, the central question regarding Hillary-for-Senate is not "if" but "when."

Part of the swelling certainty is wishful thinking on the part of Democrats. What began as off-handed flattery by Charlie Rangel, the congressman from Harlem, has ballooned into a sort of mass mania: Hillary must run. She is the party's only hope against New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, the likely Republican nominee. Her candidacy will spark a political renaissance, energizing Democrats nationwide. Inspired by her willingness to fight the good progressive fight (even after all she's been through!), Americans, especially young people and

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women, will rush to get involved. Volunteerism will skyrocket, voter participation will surge, and, most important, wallets will open wide. The race will be tough, but, ultimately, Hillary will be swept into office, where she will reign as far more than a lowly freshman championing upstate dairy farmers. She will "shine a light" on issues of importance to women, children, and the poor. She will be this generation's Bobby Kennedy. Camelot is once again within our grasp. Hillary in 2008!

To be sure, not everyone is quite so gung ho. Some of the first lady's friends are privately counseling against a run, and a handful of Democratic politicians and supporters have publicly expressed concern. The major objection seems to be that, after six years in the inhospitable fishbowl of the White House, Hillary should not subject herself to further abuse. In an April poll by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion, a majority of respondents—including many who said they would vote for HRC—felt that she shouldn't run. Their reasoning, explains director Lee Miringoff, wasn't based on the first lady's electability. It was more along the lines of, "What does she need this aggravation for?"

There have also been rumblings about what a Hillary run might mean for the Clinton legacy. If she and Al Gore won their respective races, who would be the official torchbearer of the "Third Way"? If she lost, would that strip some of the shine from a Gore victory? And what if they both lost? How would that play in the history books for poor Bill?

AT THE RISK OF SEEMING INSENSITIVE: Who cares? Political achievements notwithstanding, after everything Bill Clinton has put our nation through, so what if his legacy remains a crusty dress and a contempt citation? Likewise, agonizing over the slings and arrows poor Hillary might suffer on the campaign trail is a monumental waste of energy. She's a big girl. She knows how the game is played. And, here again, why should the American electorate spend even ten minutes trying to fathom the life choices of a woman who, for nearly three decades, has stuck by a guy who long ago sold his moral compass for a piece of ass?

Democrats in particular have bigger, more serious questions to chew over—the biggest and most serious being: What would a Hillary candidacy really mean for the party? The first lady is said to be contemplating whether she could bear to run and lose. But, even if she ran and won, there's the very real possibility that her candidacy could handicap the party nationwide. She could divert resources from other candidates, politicize their races in ways that don't play well beyond the Upper West Side, and become a rallying point for conservatives still itching to exploit anti-Clinton sentiment. She could, in other words, do precisely what her husband has done time and again—sacrifice the good of her party and her cause to satisfy her own ambitions.

At this point, most Democrats are too busy praying for a Hillary candidacy to ponder its potential downside. Hillary fever is nowhere more evident than among the party faithful in New York City. My long night at the Grand Hyatt in Manhattan was spent, not sipping Chardonnay with a charming suitor, but among 750 Democrats at the first annual Jefferson-Jackson State Committee Dinner. At $150 a plate (or $1,000 if one wished to attend a predinner reception with HRC), the dinner was a tedious affair, primarily an opportunity for county chairs and state politicos to celebrate themselves while raising lots of money. A dozen speakers took to the podium, each armed with talking points and a list of 20 people to thank. At the back of the room, penned behind metal police barricades along with several dozen other media folk, I felt as though I were trapped at a low-budget version of the Oscars, with every key grip and best boy being saluted for his efforts.

But there was only one star in attendance at this ceremony. The first lady, looking very NYC in a smart black suit, sparkled her way through the evening—bantering with tablemates, delicately sipping iced tea, looking coy at every hopeful mention of her candidacy, and smiling brightly at all those who approached her table to pay tribute. The event's underlying purpose was clearly to show Hillary how much the Empire State loves her and how fabulous it would be to be a part of it, New York, New York (a few bars of which accompanied her entrance into dinner). She stayed long after the last dessert was devoured and the last apparatchik thanked. "A half hour after the event ended, she was still working the line—just like her husband," says Victor Kovner, a big-money Democrat who ran the '96 Clinton-Gore campaign in New York. "If that's not the indicia of a candidate, I don't know what is."

You can't really blame the New York Dems. Whatever her plans, the first lady is shamelessly feeding the speculative frenzy with her candidate-like behavior. There are certain steps one must take if one is serious about running a statewide race in New York—steps far more pedestrian than nibbling grilled salmon at Midtown fund-raisers. One must shuffle off to Buffalo and Plattsburgh, Watertown and Yonkers. There are hands to shake and cheeks to kiss and dozens of local issues on which to bone up. And, thus far, under the tutelage of former White House adviser Harold Ickes, Clinton seems to be making all the right moves.

FOR STARTERS, THE PSEUDO-CANDIDATE HAS been burning up the phone lines between Washington and New York, working her way down The List. Compiled by Ickes, a veteran of New York politics, The List comprises 200 names of "must call" players around the state, including politicians, party operatives, religious leaders, union leaders, leaders of the African American and gay communities, and so on. Among HRC's strategic circle of phone pals is Erie County Party Chairman Steven Pigeon, whose district

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includes the city of Buffalo. While Democrats generally fare well on Election Day in New York City, upstate—with its dozens of small, rural counties—traditionally goes Republican. Certain urban centers, such as Albany, Rochester, Syracuse, and Buffalo, are vital to helping Democrats cut into the GOP's margins. Pigeon, therefore, is a good man to know. Among the scintillating local issues on which he (like several other upstate chairmen) has been briefing the first lady: outrageous airfares, the lack of a decent North-South interstate, and the battle with Canada over whether to expand or replace the Peace Bridge, which links Buffalo with Fort Erie, Ontario. More broadly, he says, upstate voters are looking for someone to spotlight the region's stubbornly stagnant economy. Clinton is already on the case, reports Pigeon: "Fifty percent of our conversations are about the upstate economy and issues rather than politics."

ANOTHER NAME ON HILLARY'S CALL list is David Alpert, Westchester County's party chairman. As in upstate, Republicans have the electoral edge in the New York City suburbs, which include Westchester, Suffolk, and Nassau Counties. The battle for the burbs can be brutal, and, in the past two decades, Westchester has emerged as an electoral bellwether. As goes Westchester, so goes New York. Well aware of this, the first lady has been doing her homework on both the local issues and the local populace, says Alpert. "I made a comment about our having the fourth-largest city in the state, Yonkers," he recalls, at which point Clinton proceeded to quiz him about the city's ethnic breakdown and the origin of particular groups.

Of course, one cannot run an unofficial exploratory campaign on phone research alone. So, despite the myriad demands of First Ladyhood, Hillary has managed to make several trips to New York in recent weeks. Among the stops on her non-campaign tour: a teachers' convention in Niagara Falls, a public school on Long Island, an awards luncheon for the broadcasting industry, an AFL-CIO conference in Buffalo, a meeting of the Long Island Women's Agenda, and dinners for the Jewish Child Care Association and the United Jewish Appeal. She has appeared at fund-raisers for Representatives Jerrold Nadler and John LaFalce; future events include rallies or fund-raisers for Representatives Carolyn Maloney, Maurice Hinchey, and Nita Lowey (the candidate-in-waiting should Hillary decide not to run). She has also pledged to tape radio and phone endorsements for a special state Senate election in Rockland County (part of the all-important suburbs).

And so on and so forth. Though the first lady and adviser Ickes remain publicly mum about when she will make her final decision, the breadth and depth of their probing has convinced most political watchers that she plans to go for it. If so, before Democrats are presented with a fait accompli, they need to stop salivating and revisit a couple of key questions about a Hillary candidacy.

The most obvious is whether she could win. Without a doubt, she'd make a formidable candidate. She is intelligent, articulate, driven, a consummate fund-raiser, a veteran campaigner, and a major celebrity. On a more micro level, she knows from Bill's '96 campaign how to court the soccer moms and swing suburbanites who will likely decide the New York race. Her presumptive Republican challenger, however, is no slouch himself. For all his many defects, Mayor Giuliani is a two-term incumbent with a solid record of urban improvement (making him the darling of the suburbs) and a proven vote-getting ability among traditionally Democratic Jews and Latinos. Even Hillary's most ardent admirers agree that a Clinton-Giuliani matchup would be tough. For every positive the first lady brings to the table, there is also a negative, and some of her particular negatives would go a long way toward canceling out some of the mayor's more glaring flaws.

HILLARY IS A POLITICAL LIGHTNING rod. There's just something about the Clintons that gets Republicans'—and many Democrats'—blood up. Even Ickes acknowledges that "there are people who have made up their minds about her, and I don't think we're going to sway them." Thus, voters' feelings about Giuliani could become a secondary issue. People who don't even like the mayor—of which there are many—might nonetheless contribute to and pull the lever for him as a slap at Hillary. Already, Giuliani is exploiting the situation. His supporters have set up a "HillaryNo" website, encouraging visitors to send donations to Friends of Giuliani as a way to "send a message to" the first lady. In a recent CNBC interview, Giuliani told Tim Russert that his exploratory committee is pulling in significantly more money than expected, a development he attributed to anti-Hillary sentiment.

She could help Giuliani combat the state's mayoral curse. "There seems to be a jinx on New York City mayors," jokes Bill Mulrow, a state Democratic player for the past 20 years. "There's been no New York City mayor since 1868 who has gone higher than the exalted position of mayor." In part, this is thought to be because upstate voters tend to eye New York City mayors with suspicion. In western New York, says Steve Pigeon, a New York City mayor is considered as much of an outsider as some slob from New Jersey. Throughout upstate, many voters perceive Giuliani as a liberal and darkly recall his endorsement of Mario Cuomo in the 1994 gubernatorial race. Hillary's controversial and liberal reputation, however, helps inoculate Giuliani. "Mrs. Clinton tends to make Rudy Giuliani look like a Republican to Republicans upstate," says Bill Cunningham, a Democratic consultant who ran Moynihan's 1994 campaign. Similarly, Clinton's lack of ties to New York will help Giuliani make the case that he is the candidate more in

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touch with the state's interests. Even if New Yorkers don't care whether Clinton is a "carpetbagger," her presence will make Giuliani look like an authentic in-stater even to voters north of Manhattan.

She can rival Giuliani on the public unlikability scale. Love him or loathe him, you have to admit that the mayor has a personality problem. He is brittle, obnoxious, pious, and imperious. As a smiling Madonna on the cover of *Vogue*, Hillary appears the serene antithesis of Rudy. When provoked, however, the first lady can get pretty harsh and self-righteous herself. The race could quickly degenerate into an eye-gouging, name-calling, mud-slinging free-for-all—particularly with the New York tabloids egging both parties on.

ALL THAT SAID, CLINTON WOULD still stand a solid chance of victory, regardless of who her opponent was. But here is where an even more important question surfaces—the one that, amazingly enough, nobody seems that concerned about. Win or lose, how would Hillary's candidacy affect the Democratic Party nationwide?

In politics, it always makes sense to start with the money. For the New York Senate race, political pros figure that each candidate would need somewhere in the neighborhood of $15 million. (The '98 Schumer-D'Amato battle topped $40 million total, but both men had essentially spent the previous six years fund-raising.) No one doubts that Clinton could raise the money, even if she got a late start. The trouble is, if the first lady is raising money for her own campaign, she can't be raising it for other candidates. And that's no small matter. During last year's elections, for example, the first lady attended some 100 events in close to 20 states, bringing in millions of dollars. (*Time* reported that she pulled in $1 million for Chuck Schumer and $1.6 million for Barbara Boxer.) Her tireless efforts were widely credited, as *The Dallas Morning News* put it, "with pulling several Democratic chestnuts out of the fire."

Many Democrats say that the broad-based excitement generated by Clinton's run would more than make up for her inability to appear on behalf of individual candidates. In addition to the solid fund-raising base the Clintons enjoy in New York, Hillary admirers nationwide would rush to support the party, says Victor Kovner. But the sword cuts both ways. Forget Giuliani's plans to use Hillary as a fund-raising tool; just wait until Mitch McConnell gets rolling. As chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, McConnell is charged with drumming up money to distribute to Senate candidates as he sees fit. In the 2000 election cycle—with a no-incumbent presidential race and a heated battle for control of the House—McConnell might have trouble attracting attention and funding for his races. That all changes with Hillary in the mix. Suddenly, McConnell would have a Ted Kennedy-like demon with which to frighten Republican donors into parting with their cash.

The issue then becomes which party would best exploit the fund-raising bonanza. Even discounting the GOP's consistent superiority in the money department, here is where things could get really sticky for Democrats. The stakes in a Hillary race would likely be too high, a loss too embarrassing. If the race got tight (as all expect), Clinton would inevitably suck up more than her share of resources. This wouldn't be a problem within New York. "This is the only statewide race next year, so we don't have to worry about drawing from other statewide candidates," says Michael Schell, chairman of the state party's executive committee. But it could be a problem for candidates elsewhere. The Democrats face tough, expensive races in Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Michigan next year—which means eleventh-hour assistance could be crucial. Particularly if the Republicans decide to sacrifice Giuliani—who they've never much liked anyway—and funnel all those bonus anti-Hillary dollars into winning lower-profile races, the rest of the Democratic candidates would suffer.

Democrats, of course, insist that there is enough funding for everyone. But the New York party in particular knows that the money race is a zero-sum game. As a key source of political money for PACs and candidates nationwide, the state has spawned its share of funding conflicts in recent years. Party Chair Judith Hope has joked that some staffers call New York the "ATM state" because politicians from all over the country come to make withdrawals. In a January 1998 article on the phenomenon, the *Daily News* reported, "The parade of politicians seeking handouts here has grown so unwieldy, lawyer Pamela Liapakis went so far as to bring five out-of-state Senate candidates into one room and let donors choose to whom they would give." Noting that the problem was particularly acute for the Democratic Party, "which, compared with Republicans, has relatively few deep-pocketed donors, but a greater concentration of them in New York," the article revealed that Hope had "caused a stir ... when she complained that President Clinton's frequent fund-raising forays into New York for the Democratic National Committee were undermining state Democrats on the eve of campaigns against D'Amato and Gov. Pataki." State party leaders, in turn, adopted a resolution "demanding that the New York party receive 25% of any money that Clinton or anyone else raises in the state for the DNC."

EVEN IF THE MONEY RACE TURNED OUT to be a wash, Clinton's candidacy would necessarily deprive other Democrats of an equally valuable commodity: her star power at their events. This, as much as her fund-raising ability, was considered vital to the party's electoral gains in '98. "Her impact was electric," one of Schumer's campaign consultants told *Time* in the wake of the election. "We trended up every time she was here." The first lady received similar kudos for tipping Tom Vilsack over the top in the Iowa gov-

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ernor's race. "The polls were showing a dead heat, and then she brought this burst of enthusiasm," a Vilsack operative told *Time*.

As with the fund-raising issue, the party is counting on media attention and energy generated by Clinton's own campaign to boost Democrats' profiles nationally. But having Hillary the glamorous and enigmatic first lady show up at your clambake creates a completely different type of buzz than having Hillary the controversial politico drawing fire on the campaign trail. Right now, the first lady is a sympathetic and beloved figure. But her favorable ratings didn't skyrocket until she stopped being a strong, independent feminist and became a devoted wife. During the Lewinsky scandal, polls put the first lady's favorable ratings in the high sixties. Compare this to 1994, when, following her attempts to reform health care, her favorable ratings were stuck in the forties. It was around this time that the White House decided to start lowering her profile.

THE MORE DOMESTIC THE FIRST LADY HAS become, the higher her numbers have risen. A March profile in *The Washington Post Magazine* noted that, according to the Pew Research Center, "57 percent of the American public had a favorable view of Hillary Clinton in January 1997. A little over a year and a half later—just after the president's public confession—that number had risen to 66 percent." According to Pew's Andrew Kohut, the big gains were from "more culturally conservative groups such as older people; less well-educated Americans; and men, especially what Kohut called the 'testosterone set.' And for the first time, women who didn't go to college . . . felt exactly the same way about Hillary Rodham Clinton as those who did go to college." These recent converts are the people who disapproved of Hillary Clinton the uppity woman. And they are the people who would be less than impressed if she left her man alone in the White House in order to stump around the New York countryside.

Such a shift is already apparent in New York. Initially, voters were thrilled at the idea of Clinton's candidacy. In a January poll by Marist, respondents preferred Clinton to Mayor Giuliani, 53 to 42 percent. But, as the possibility of a Hillary candidacy has become more real, the numbers have come back down to earth. Last month's poll had her neck and neck with Giuliani, 44 to 43 percent. Similarly, in January, just over a third of respondents thought she shouldn't run, versus more than half in April. If Hillary does become a candidate, and the nation starts looking at her again as a tough, independent political figure rather than as a glamorous, harmless celebrity, public perception nationwide is apt to experience a similar adjustment. At that point, even if Hillary found the time to campaign for other candidates, the payoff wouldn't be the same.

These developments could prove particularly painful for a certain Democratic presidential hopeful. Whatever his virtues, Al Gore is not a warm and fuzzy guy. Up there on the dais for Gore, talking about education, health care, child care, and all those other issues that play so well in middle America, Hillary could save the vice president from attempting the emotive heavy lifting himself. What's more, Gore does not excite the party's base, nor does he poll particularly well with women. (A Pew survey in April showed George W. Bush leading Gore among women voters, 52 to 42 percent.) Hillary could help on both counts. But if she's not available, what prominent woman could step into the breach? Boxer? Feinstein? Tipper? Without Hillary, the Gore campaign could be facing a serious gender crisis.

The vice president's people remain tight-lipped on the subject, while, over in the first lady's camp, Ickes dismisses the idea that her run would affect Gore. "People are gonna vote for Al Gore based on Al Gore, not whether Hillary Clinton is out campaigning for him or not," he asserts. "When you're running for president, it's seldom that others have coattails for you to ride. If a presidential candidate has to rely on others for their coattails, they have real problems." But Gore looks to be facing a tough race. Hillary may not have coattails per se, but everyone seems to agree that she can rev up a crowd. As the campaign season heats up, Gore could use some of that energy—as could a dozen or so other Democratic Senate and gubernatorial candidates. As Bill Cunningham told an upstate reporter back in February: "She's a formidable political weapon. Do you want to put that weapon in New York or do you want it on the battlefield?"

IN MID-MAY, WHILE IN MACEDONIA VISITING the Kosovar refugee camps, Hillary Rodham Clinton sat down for an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour. In her dark jacket and crisp, white blouse, a delicate gold cross nestled at her throat, the first lady looked every inch the polished, serious politician. And, for most of the interview, she sounded the part, articulately addressing (or side-stepping) questions about the NATO bombing campaign, Americans' isolationist tendencies, and her ongoing efforts to promote women's rights as a U.S. policy objective.

When the subject of her Senate aspirations came up, however, Hillary turned coy. She giggled, she ducked, she dodged, she squirmed in her chair, and I'd almost swear she was blushing beneath that stage makeup. When Amanpour asked if she was any closer to making a decision, Clinton—who could not stop smiling—assured us that she will have much to say on this subject when she's ready. Pressed on the point, the first lady would say only that her decision will come "sooner rather than later." "Summer?" asked Amanpour, giving it one last try. "You know," teased Hillary, "summer's not that far away."

Hear that, Democrats? Time is running out. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Under Florentine Skies

ITALY HAS LONG FIGURED in the English imagination, especially for writers. More of Shakespeare's plays take place in Italy than in any country except England. But possibly it was the Brownings, Robert and Elizabeth, who set the still-prevailing affinity. When Elizabeth died in Florence in 1861, the municipality placed a tablet on her house with some lines by an Italian poet: "Here wrote and died Elizabeth Barrett Browning ... who made of her verse a golden ring linking Italy and England." Since that day a steady line of English residents in Florence has kept that ring polished.

It is at Elizabeth's grave that **Tea with Mussolini** (G2 Films) begins. In June of 1935 a group of middle-aged English ladies, along with one American, all of whom live in Florence, have gathered there to commemorate the poet's death in somewhat lofty manner. Prominent in the group are a British ambassador's widow, Lady Hester (Maggie Smith); Arabella, a painter of sorts (Judi Dench); Mary, a secretary of sorts (Joan Plowright); and Georgie, a Yank archeologist in, naturally, down-to-earth clothes (Lily Tomlin). The sight of these faces brings an immediate smile of welcome to our spirits. This isn't any conventional all-star mob: this is a constellation. (Locally, the group is called *I Scorpioni*, the scorpions. Hard to see why: only one of them, Hester, is acidulous.) A few days later the group is joined, much to the annoyance of Lady Hester, by a generous, money-dripping American-Jewish woman, Elsa (Cher), a former Broadway musical star who collects paintings and wealthy, moribund husbands. All the costumes, by Jenny Beavan, are a treat, but Elsa's clothes are vulgarity raised to wit.

The screenplay by the English playwright John Mortimer and the Italian designer-director Franco Zeffirelli is drawn from Zeffirelli's memoirs, we are told. (He was born in Florence in 1923.) Luca, the boy in the film—about eight at the start—was sired out of wedlock by Mary's employer. A crisis arises in the father's life, and he asks Mary to help. She finds herself, not too much against her will, as the guardian of Luca, whom she takes into her home and teaches English. Thus Luca's life is interwoven with the lives of the several English and two American women.

Fascism is, in two senses, the order of the day, an order that is admired by Lady Hester, accepted shruggingly by most of the ladies, and viewed sardonically by Georgie, one of those sharp characters more common in films than in life who immediately see the truth about everything. When some zealous blackshirts get unruly and break windows, Lady Hester hies herself to Rome to complain and, because of her late husband, is given an audience with Il Duce. He lays on his unguent of oil and sex appeal and permits her to pour the tea that is wheeled in. Back she goes to Florence, well unguented.

But the atmosphere changes with the arrival, in Italian policy, of Hitler. Luca's father, who had wanted his son to become an English gentleman, now wants him to become a German businessman; he takes Luca out of Mary's care and sends him to Austria. When war with Britain begins, the English ladies are arrested and hustled into a bleak barracks. However, they are soon moved into a San Gimignano hotel, an improvement that is secretly financed by Elsa who, as an American, is not yet an enemy alien. (Hester, still sniffy about Elsa, thinks that Il Duce has arranged for the hotel.) But enemy status eventually arrives for Elsa, too, and, of course, Georgie.

Luca returns from Austria to Florence, now a handsome youth, and after joining the partisans is able to help Elsa who, as a Jew, is in special danger. Then danger increases for all, and the necessary climax arrives with cinematic punctuality. It stretches credibility to see the ladies thwart German destruction of San Gimignano treasures; still, it made me recall walking across the Ponte Vecchio in 1956 behind some German tourists who sighed "*Wunderbar*" as they strolled, while I remembered how close that bridge had come to destruction by their countrymen a dozen years before.

By focusing on these ladies, their crotchets and quarrels and adorations, plus their involvement with a growing boy, *Tea with Mussolini* announces early on that it is not going to be another *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, a film in which gentility in Italy is slowly pulverized by political reality. Zeffirelli's picture from its start is a character comedy-drama, more theatrical than ruthless. Though it is set in a volatile time—in an achingly beautiful place—it uses only enough of political reality to pigment its texture and climax.

Its rich movie-ness is heightened by the talents involved. John Mortimer knows how to shape scenes with dialogue, much as painters know how to turn shapes with color. Zeffirelli, in his long career as designer and director of opera, theater, and film, has not been noted for restraint; yet here his directing is generally taciturn and implicative—for instance, the scene in the orphanage where Mary decides to keep Luca instead of leaving him there. Even some sequences with Arabella's dog reflect not cliché but real English dottiness about dogs. The cinematographer David Watkin, the same Watkin who shot *Help!* and *Catch-22* and *Chariots of Fire* and *Out of Africa* and *Night Falls on Manhattan* and I had better stop, blesses us once again visually. The editor was Tariq Anwar, who did, to name only one, *The Madness of King George*, and who helps to temper the sentiment of this film by working for terseness and elision.

Now let's all rise, please, for the cast. First, Cher. She has already proved that she is not just a singer who is trying her hand at acting. She has genuine talent; and she plumbs all that needs to be found in every moment. Lily Tomlin is a bit glib in the you-can't-kid-me role, and her character's sexual preference is rather pointedly included, but she barrels us along with her. I am not going to praise Dame Maggie Smith or Dame Judi Dench; Newcastle has enough coal. But I insist on bowing to Joan Plowright, she of the brown velvet eyes. On and on she has come in the thirty-nine years since the sturdy daughter in *The Entertainer*, and now she has the quiet confidence of an artist who knows how to balance an actor's self with a character's truth. Anyone in the audience can see—and every student of acting *should* see—the subtlety in the way Plowright answers Luca's father when he asks her to take the boy. The answer is merely "Yes," but the pause before it is a biography and a judgment—in a few seconds. (When we get to her apartment and see the photographs of the father and the fiancé she lost in the Great War, we remember that pause.)

A sweetly simple Italian song of the day opens and closes the film. It's a perfect choice: it fixes the partial Italy that these ladies live in, an Italy to which, in their slightly nutty way, they are striving to be loyal. ■

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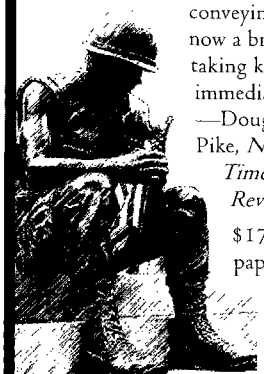

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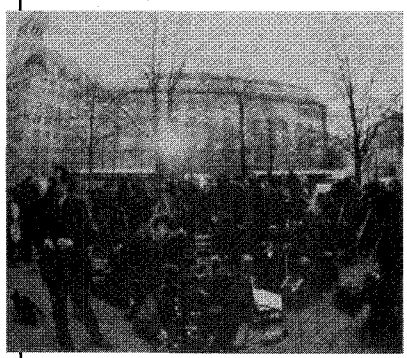

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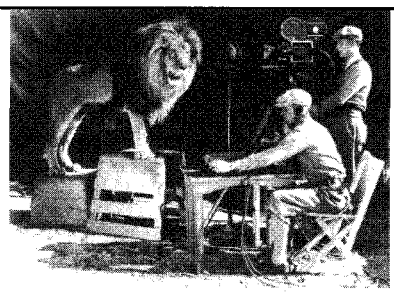

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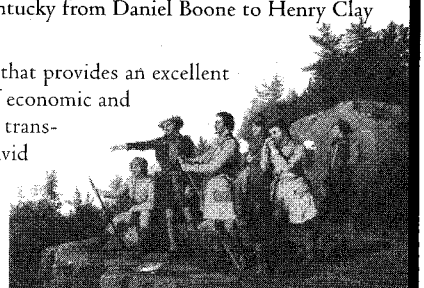

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Robert Brustein on Theater
Spring Roundup

IT IS THE TIME OF YEAR when plays are being crowded like cattle into Broadway corrals, opening fast (and sometimes closing faster) in competition for the Tony awards. Facing this kind of stampede, a seasonal wrangler like myself tends to get a little behind in his branding duties. Here's a belated roundup of some of the prime beef in the latest theatrical herd—plays from England and Ireland.

The Iceman Cometh (Brooks Atkinson Theatre). With a supporting cast mostly imported from the London Almeida Theatre production, Kevin Spacey is giving a sizzling performance in this latest version of O'Neill's exhaustive and (at four and a half hours in length) exhausting study of human delusion. Spacey was a brilliant Jamie Tyrone in Jonathan Miller's fast-forward *Long Day's Journey Into Night* some years ago. He is absolutely mesmerizing as Hickey here—lithe as a dancer, coiled as a cobra, with a latent fury that sometimes turns volcanic. In conceiving this character, O'Neill was inspired by the way Bruce Barton conceived of Jesus—as a supersalesman who peddled his new religion as if it were a brand of detergent. The play is permeated with Scriptural imagery, notably a last supper (Harry Hope's birthday party with thirteen guests at table), and it features more than a few types based on New Testament characters, including a Judas (Parritt, the informer), a Peter (the "old foolosopher" Larry Slade, who is the stone on which Hickey founds his Church), and a trio of Mary Magdalenes (Margie, Pearl, and Cora, the whores who pass as "tarts"). The true gospel of Hickey, the Jesus character, consists of absolute freedom from lies and illusions (O'Neill, with a glance at Greenwich Village opium-eaters, calls these "pipe dreams"), and anyone who fails to embrace his brand of salvation is damned.

The reason the play is so long (and schematic) is that the author tries to include every possible form of human illusion in his fable—political, religious, sexual, racial, moral, and psychological. This *Iceman* seemed to me considerably longer than previous versions because, aside from Spacey and a few others, I didn't think many of the actors, particularly those imported from Britain, penetrated their roles very deeply. O'Neill creates a series of generic types characterized by a single bony trait. It is the obligation of actors to add psychological flesh.

Waiting for Hickey's entrance—he doesn't arrive until the very end of Act I—has always been a test of endurance for audiences. In this production, it seems like waiting for Godot. I saw the original *Iceman* in 1946, directed by Eddie Dowling, with James Barton as Hickey and Dudley Digges as Harry Hope, and I saw Jose Quintero's bookend versions, forty years apart, starring Jason Robards as a young man and later as an aging veteran. Spacey holds his own very well among this company, but at times he seems too isolated by the supporting actors and by the set.

I yield to no one in my admiration for the designer Bob Crowley. But in adapting his intimate Almeida design to the cavernous proscenium stage of the Brooks Atkinson, Crowley has been forced to build a barroom to the dimensions of the main concourse at Grand Central Station. As a result, the characters seem less to be awaiting the coming of Hickey than the arrival of the next train to Hoboken. The critical feeling of claustrophobia, of being lost in the depths of the sea, which is the metaphor of Harry Hope's saloon, evaporates in excessive space.

Where Howard Davies's production succeeds, however, is in underlining the symbiotic relationships between the various characters of the aquarium. I learned something from watching this *Iceman* I didn't previously know, namely, that it is a play about marriage. Yes, of course, it concerns the blighted union of Hickey and Evelyn, and the way her saintly, forgiving nature drives him to the ultimate divorce, an act of murder. But Larry Slade is also married, in a sense—to the man he finally gives permission to commit suicide, Don Parritt; Cecil Lewis, the Briton, is married to Piet Wetjoen, the Boer; Rockey is married to the two whores in his stable; Chuck is married to Cora, though he cannot bring himself to put a ring on her finger; Pat McGloin, the ex-cop, is married to Ed Mosher, the ex-carnival tout; and so on. The entire alcoholic gang is as dependent on each other and their leader as the Jonestown cultists were on Jim Jones, which is the reason why Hickey almost succeeds in making them swallow his poisonous brand of Kool-Aid.

Via Dolorosa (Booth Theatre). David Hare's shadow has been lengthening over Broadway all this season—as a playwright with *The Blue Room* and *Amy's View*, and as an actor-writer with *Via Dolorosa*. It is easy to feel glutted by Hare's self-righteous, furrow-browed brand of political activism, especially when you're being force-fed his ideas in such large doses. With *Via Dolorosa*, the written text goes down easily enough; it is the surrounding production that proves a little indigestible.

Hare was one of three writers (the others being an Israeli and a Palestinian) commissioned to compose something about the period of British Mandate rule. Encouraged by his friend Philip Roth to mine the literary material available in post-Rabin Israel ("these people are so crazy," Roth told him, "there's room enough for all of us"), the fifty-year-old playwright undertook a trip to the fifty-year-old state, holding conversations and conducting interviews with the left and right extremes of Palestinian and Israeli opinion. *Via Dolorosa* is the result.

Hare deals eloquently, compassionately, and feelingly with most of the issues currently roiling this stormy area. He listens to extremist Israeli settlers vow never to surrender another inch of land and to angry Palestinians deplore the way Arabs are being depicted as terrorists in Hollywood. He sympathizes with an infuriated Israeli woman radical who believes "We're going backwards.... We've become stingy and greedy." He grows increasingly gloomy about the way Israel and Palestine "are bound up in each other's unhappiness." He returns to Britain, anguished by the way stones have become more important than human lives and living ideas.

Given the enormity of his subject, Hare does a sound if synoptic job with his material. My objections to the evening are not political or literary, but rather environmental. The show simply seems uncomfortable in a commercial Broadway house. The author, by his own admission, is not an actor. He stands before us in a white shirt and black trousers, hunching his shoulders, clenching and rubbing his hands, jerking his body spasmodically like a car idling on one cylinder, speaking in those adenoidal English public school tones so richly satirized by Peter Cook. Yet there is something appealing about his amateurism; his very awkwardness becomes a kind of style.

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If Hare had just sat at a table reading from a script, like Spalding Gray, or if he had made some effort to impersonate the people he interviewed, like Anna Deavere Smith, there would have been less incompatibility between form and substance. But this Royal Court production of *Via Dolorosa* has been staged, and not very effectively either, by that formidable director Stephen Daldry. Instead of standing still and speaking directly to the audience, Hare has been coached to move from a desk stage left to a desk stage right; to sit; to stand; to try to reach emotional crescendos that are beyond his abilities; to find his mark for pinpoint spots on his face; and, during one badly advised climax, to have his journey illustrated by a screen that rises above his head to reveal a miniature version of the Dome of the Rock. Daldry's theatrical effects, few as they are, embroider a presentation that depends for its effect on candidness and sincerity. We are distracted from the narrative by these efforts to justify the high ticket prices of a one-man Broadway show.

Conor McPherson's **The Weir** (Walter Kerr Theatre) and Martin McDonagh's **The Lonesome West** (Lyceum Theatre) are two Irish productions that, like *Via Dolorosa*, come to us courtesy of the Royal Court—so does McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, though both McDonagh productions originated with the Druid Theatre in Galway. I won't waste much space on *The Weir*, since it struck me as a rather tiresome and retrograde exercise in Irish picturesque. The play is named after a dam that abuts the saloon in which the play is set. Like Ionesco's bald soprano, it is mentioned only once, though, unlike Ionesco's characters, the denizens of McPherson's saloon fail to show any embarrassment over its lack of relevance to the action. On second thought, "action" is the wrong word in this context. *The Weir* has very little dramatic action. It is virtually all narrative—four supernatural stories told by four different characters between generous libations of beer and brandy. The last of these tales—about the death of a little girl and her return as a ghost—has some emotional weight. The others are mostly Hibernian whimsy.

The Lonesome West, on the other hand, is a powerhouse, a considerable advance on McDonagh's less well-crafted if more highly praised first play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, indeed almost as good as his similarly underestimated *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. McDonagh's title comes from a line in *The Playboy of the Western World* ("Well, there's a sainted glory in the lonesome west"), and the play confirms McDonagh's position as John Millington Synge's legitimate heir. Also set in Leenane, a small village in County Galway, the play revolves around two meanspirited brothers, Coleman and Valene Connor, engaged in a ferocious feud, and the sorrow their venomous hatred causes a saintly whiskey-soaked priest named Father Welsh.

Having killed his own father because he insulted his hairstyle, Coleman has bought his brother's silence about the murder by ceding him his share of the estate. Father Welsh, distraught about the suicide by drowning of a county constable, his faith shaken by the vileness of human behavior, also decides to commit suicide in the local pond. Since Welsh has left a note imploring the brothers to patch up their quarrel, Coleman and Valene are momentarily shamed into compliance, and, in a scene as funny as anything to be found on the modern stage, each confesses to a list of sins against the other which the victim is then obliged to forgive. When Coleman, who has already roasted Valene's venerated plastic religious icons in an oven, apologizes for having cut off the ears of Valene's beloved dog, his outraged brother threatens Coleman with a huge carving knife. Coleman grabs Valene's shotgun and blows up his favorite possession, a newly purchased stove. The bereft Valene follows Coleman to a local pub, saying

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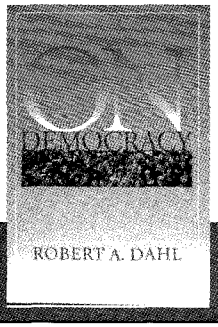

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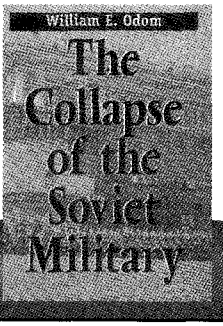

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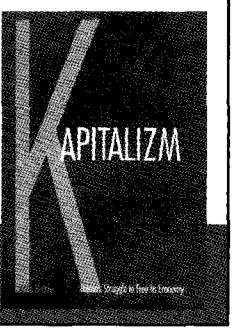

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"Well, I won't be buying the fecker a pint."

In this play, McDonagh again demonstrates that nobody today can touch him when it comes to dramatizing the extremes of human kindness and human viciousness, and nobody today can mine more humor out of people in a brute state of nature. Garry Hynes, the Druid's gifted artistic director, has drawn performances of great subtlety and power from her four-person cast—Maelíosa Stafford as Coleman, looking like a malignant Barry Fitzgerald; Brían F. O'Byrne, playing Valene like an unkempt version of Alan Alda; David Ganly, sweet and tortured as Father Welsh; and Dawn Bradfield as Girleen Kelleher, a loose, foulmouthed girl with a fourteen-carat heart. ■

Why conservatism is a tribute to liberalism.

The Revolution That Never Was

By ALAN WOLFE

I.

In 1948, Richard Weaver published *Ideas Have Consequences*, a book that would become, according to Frank Meyer, "the *fons et origo* of the contemporary American conservative movement." Weaver explored the consequences of one particular idea: that there were no transcendental truths lying beyond the capacity of man to make sense out of the world. Scientific and philosophical rationalism led to the denial of original sin, Weaver argued, and so man was cut off from eternals and forced to live with nothingness. Ideas, then, could be very pernicious things; but the title of Weaver's book—chosen, incidentally, by his publisher—left the opposite impression. For if bad ideas had consequences, so presumably did good ideas. Conservatives had never quite lived down Mill's description of them as "the stupid party"—especially in America, whose best conservative minds, Henry James and T.S. Eliot, preferred to live abroad. Weaver's manifesto was read to suggest that American conservatives must develop ideas of their own.

Yet another conclusion, equally pertinent to the fate of conservatism in contemporary America, could be drawn from Weaver's title. If ideas have consequences, so does the absence of ideas. Nothing is more important to an understanding of contemporary conservatism, I think, than this stark but little noticed fact: despite decades of trying, and a golden opportunity handed to them by liberal failure, conservatives in America have been unable to come up with any sustained and significant ideas capable of giving substance to their complaints against the contemporary world. I say ideas, not slogans.

This should have been the golden age of conservatism. Liberals—understood in the New Deal, Keynesian sense of the term—had quite a run for their money; but time runs out on even the most consensual of philosophies, and by the 1980s the twin triumphs of Reaganism and Thatcherism appeared to herald a revolution in thought and in policy. No longer would conservatism be a "remnant," attractive only to "superfluous" men. (The words are Albert J. Nock's.) Barely containing their triumphalism, conservative intellectuals bypassed universities to create think tanks that spewed out books, articles, and position papers at dizzying rates. No activity of the modern state—from its economic interventions to its drug policy—was left uncriticized.

AGAINST LIBERALISM
by John Kekes
(Cornell University Press, 256 pp., $16.95)

A CASE FOR CONSERVATISM
by John Kekes
(Cornell University Press, 256 pp., $29.95)

AFTER LIBERALISM: MASS DEMOCRACY IN THE MANAGERIAL STATE
by Paul Edward Gottfried
(Princeton University Press, 185 pp., $27.95)

CONSERVATISM: AN ANTHOLOGY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT FROM DAVID HUME TO THE PRESENT
edited by Jerry Z. Muller
(Princeton University Press, 464 pp., $19.95)

THE FUTURE AND ITS ENEMIES: THE GROWING CONFLICT OVER CREATIVITY, ENTERPRISE, AND PROGRESS
by Virginia Postrel
(Free Press, 295 pp., $25)

And so liberals became the tired party, tied down by their constituents to unimaginative tinkerings at the margins. 1968ers discovered, to their astonishment, that younger intellectuals were more likely to be attracted to the right than to be impressed by war stories about Mayor Daley or Bull Connor. The term "social critic," once reserved for the cantankerous C. Wright Mills, now seemed to apply to the cantankerous Allan Bloom. An ideology that had been attractive primarily to Southern racists, Midwestern isolationists, aristocratic European émigrés, and devout Catholics all of a sudden dominated the dinner parties of Georgetown and Manhattan.

Out of such ferment, two things should have happened. One is that someone should have written a serious, original, philosophically fundamental book that would do for conservatism what John Rawls had done for liberalism: systematize its principles, or, if that were considered uncongenial to the conservative point of view, explore in analytical depth its relevance for contemporary conundrums. The other is that, at least in part based on such a book, governments should have introduced programs that not only marked a sharp break with liberal ideas (there were plenty of those), but also demonstrated that conservative policies could work on their own terms. Neither happened.

Given the political excitement of the 1980s, the governmental failings of conservatism in the 1990s are nothing short of astonishing. In all of Europe, only one country, Spain, can be said to have a conservative government, and its leader,

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Jose Maria Aznar, emphasizes his belief in compassionate government. Whatever electoral problems face Christian Democrats, they pale in comparison to the fate of extreme right-wing parties in France, Italy, Germany, and Austria. They are in disarray, torn apart by rivalries and factionalism and unable to move beyond the electoral bases that they established some time ago. In Britain, to be sure, Tony Blair sometimes sounds like Margaret Thatcher, but not even his co-optive political skills can explain why the Tory Party collapsed as thoroughly as it did. It is the absence of a significant conservative force anywhere in Europe—and not, as one might have expected just a few years back, the defensive weakness of unions and Social Democrats—that has enabled the European Union to move forward so fast.

Even more striking is the near complete collapse of conservative government in the United States. Disenchanted with liberalism, Americans voted for Ronald Reagan and then continued to love him because he never took the conservatism that he preached all that seriously. They elected Bill Clinton, and then decided to keep a check on him by supporting Republicans for the House and the Senate. Conservatives responded to the latter opportunity first by trying to shut down the government and then, when that proved to be a disaster, by trying to shut down the government again. Americans took one look at the conservative members of the House of Representatives who managed the Senate trial of Bill Clinton and reached an unequivocal conclusion: if conservatism means a powerful state pushing its nose into private affairs, judging the morality of others while acting immorally itself, trampling on tradition, scorning bipartisanship, trying systematically to overturn the results of two elections, and all along insisting that the voice of the people ought to be ignored, then they did not very much like conservatism. Even if our next president is George W. Bush, it is hard to imagine conservatives having a free hand to transform America in their image.

SURELY THE GOVERNMENTAL failure of conservatism is one of the consequences of the failure of its ideologists to produce lasting ideas. The financial resources poured into the think tanks were enormous, but all the furious publication notwithstanding, conservatives seemed congenitally unable to write significant books. Irving Kristol's magnum opus was a collection of articles. Roger Scruton, the leading conservative intellectual in Britain, turned to the defense of fox-hunting and joined with leftist romantics to denounce the corrosive effects of cities. James Q. Wilson and Mary Ann Glendon wrote thoughtful and persuasive books on bureaucracies and rights, and Wilson dealt with larger themes in *The Moral Sense*, but they still seemed to deal with the parts rather than the whole of a conservative mentality. Charles Murray, an especially well-financed conservative policy wonk, found himself unable to compete with social scientists on their technical terrain; *Losing Ground* and *The Bell Curve* exposed him as little more than a mean-spirited soul spouting quasi-academic language. The most interesting writers that Peter Steinfels listed in *The Neo-Conservatives* in 1979—Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Seymour Martin Lipset—turned out to be either liberals or people with serious reservations about the conservative campaign against affirmative action.

INSTEAD OF MOVING forward, conservatism actually moved backward in the 1990s. Before Barry Goldwater, as George Nash recounts in *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, conservatives were bitterly divided among libertarians, anti-majoritarians, and anti-Communists. Frank Meyer's contribution to the movement was to push for "fusionism," a way of uniting conservatives around key principles while avoiding the issues that drove Friedrich von Hayek—whose faith in free markets allowed little place for right-wing hostility toward progress—to write essays such as "Why I Am Not a Conservative." Such unity, always precarious, is now in complete disarray. The anti-Communist wing of conservatism has had no role to play since 1989. The gap between libertarians and Christian conservatives in the Republican Party is as wide, and as unstable, as the gap that once existed between Southern Bourbons and African Americans in the Democratic Party. If there are any anti-majoritarian aristocrats still thumbing their noses at the masses, they are irrelevant to a movement that now thinks of itself as populist. These days, conservatives can bear to be in the same room with each other so long as they never talk about ideas.

Some day the history of this great intellectual failure will be written. It will likely emphasize the paradox of success: conservatives got too much money, and too many votes, too soon. It may have been wise for conservative thinkers to avoid the universities—where no idea is ever too arcane—but think tanks proved to have problems of their own: worried about pleasing their funders, unable to resist the lure of talk shows and press conferences, and exacerbating ideology rather than sharpening it, conservative think tanks destroyed any possibility of serious intellectual work. And convinced that their ideas were winning support from the voters, conservatives saw no need to lead rather than to follow public opinion—until the Clinton imbroglio, when their invocation of Burkean theories of representation proved insincere.

But as important as such explanations may be, they do not go far enough. For the conservative failure may not be a matter of this decision or that. There is another possibility to be considered, which is that conservatism itself is an impossible idea, at least for the twentieth century. Twenty years of conservative excitement seemed to give the lie to the theory of Louis Hartz that no conservatism was possible in the United States; but the conservative failure in this decade suggests that Hartz may have been right all along.

II.

IF CONSERVATISM IS about anything, it is about balance. Poised somewhere between the radical's desire to move forward and the reactionary's insistence that backward is the only way to go, the conservative emphasizes proportion in all things. The trick is to get the mixture right: a sufficient amount of passion cut with just enough reason; a willingness to accept change in order that things be kept essentially the same; an appreciation of the particular without a total rejection of the universal; a reverence for tradition and faith set off against a defense of the market and its insistence on individual freedom. Yet balance is precisely what contemporary conservatives seem to lack.

This deformity may be due to their inheritance. Two great Europeans have disproportionately shaped contemporary American conservatism, Michael Oakeshott and Leo Strauss. Almost nothing that one said could be balanced with anything that the other said. Even more importantly, neither could find balance in his own work. Oakeshott was a proponent of Little Conservatism—a disposition, he called it, as if all that being conservative required was the right psychology. Strauss taught a Big Conservatism; his ideas were rarely expressed in the revolutionary style of the manifesto, but anyone who took him seriously understood that the achievement of his ideals would require a radical reconstruction of the contemporary world. Yet there was one point on which the ideas of these two thinkers converged. If Little Conservatism left the world pretty much in place because it was resigned to defeat, Big Conservatism also left the world in place because its ambitions were utterly unrealizable.

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Little Conservatism is temperamentally unsuited to risk or, in Oakeshott's terms, to the "dangerous and the difficult." One sees in Oakeshott's writings a hostility toward planning, a weariness with proclamation, a distrust of experts, and, above all else, a suspicion not only of grand schemes to change the world but also of grand ideas designed to understand the world. Oakeshott is to conservatism what Isaiah Berlin is to liberalism: an essayist rather than a systematizer, a conversationalist more than a sermonizer, a writer who, while not immodest about displaying his learning, also takes pains to make himself clear.

HUMAN BEINGS ARE NOT by nature conservative, Oakeshott believed. Fascinated by the new and the unknown, they are too quick to throw caution to the winds in the hope that they can find something better tomorrow than what surrounds them today. If it is to resist such trends, conservatism cannot seek its own goals too quickly or too ambitiously. "What makes a conservative disposition in politics intelligible," Oakeshott wrote, as if to Strauss, "is nothing to do with natural law or a providential order, nothing to do with morals or religion; it is the observation of our current manner of living combined with the belief . . . that governing is a specific and limited activity."

Resigned as he was to offering instructions in how to live properly, Oakeshott was not a theorist of a conservative road to power. If anything, he seemed to have anticipated the idea that conservatives might want to gain control of government in order to reform human nature—and warned against it. Conservatives do not win the battle for ideas by insisting on one right way to live and then trying to harness the force of the state to ensure that people live the way that conservatives believe they should live. Quite the contrary. Much like contemporary liberals from Habermas to Rorty, Oakeshott admired the conversation—"the greatest but also the most hardly sustained of all the accomplishments of mankind," he called it—as a model for political education. "In a conversation the participants are not engaged in an inquiry or a debate; there is no 'truth' to be discovered, no proposition to be proved, no conclusion sought." This is a drawing-room conservatism, a high-table complacency, lacking the passions and the convictions that can stir masses to repudiate the decadent liberalism around them.

Strauss could hardly be said to have wanted to stir masses. If anything, Strauss clung to then-very-fashionable ideas about mass society that saw ordinary people as little more than "unintelligent, uninformed, deceitful, and irrational." But Strauss's Big Conservatism could not be further in sensibility or in ambition from Oakeshott's Little Conservatism. Many of Strauss's students insist that their mentor was not a conservative at all, that Strauss was, properly understood, a liberal—even, in his own way, a democrat. Strauss himself once said that the friend of liberal democracy should not be a flatterer of liberal democrats.

But these are unpersuasive definitions. If you are prepared to believe that liberalism is another word for "human excellence or being honorable and decent," and that liberalism existed in pre-Socratic Athens, and that one of the greatest liberals of all time was Lucretius, then, yes, Strauss was a liberal. But if you believe that liberalism is a political philosophy committed in one way or another to the proposition that individuals ought to have the autonomy to determine for themselves the appropriate morality to guide their lives, then Strauss must be understood as one of liberalism's most implacable critics.

GENUINE AUTONOMY could never be realized in a modern democracy, according to Strauss. In order to lead good lives, people needed a standard of excellence that could only be provided by a cultivated elite. The ancients had such standards, and, if properly read, their texts could offer guidance to those able to read between the lines to divine the truths that they contained. And while such capable readers do exist—Strauss left no doubt that he was one of them—modern people, attracted to the superficial and the vulgar, will surely be unwilling to heed them.

Like Oakeshott, Strauss had no interest in developing a plan to shape the world in the image of his ideas, though he did produce a number of disciples who pursued careers in the political world. Yet Strauss possessed a temperament far removed from Oakeshottian caution. His was the voice of didactic instruction: a one-way conversation, if a conversation at all. His goal was Truth—the one unambiguous standard for judging political action. Reading between his lines, one can detect hints of a mentality not altogether dissimilar from Lenin's theory of a vanguard party. Those blessed with the correct ideas just might come to serve as modern princes capable of leading their society, unbeknown to its members, to greater excellence. No wonder that for so many reading Strauss was an exhilarating experience. Here, in its cryptic way, was a chance to save the world.

American conservatism is torn between Oakeshott and Strauss, or torn between its psychology and its politics. If it lives by its principles of gradualism and moderation, it is prevented from offering a program bold enough to grasp history and bring it to a stop. If it seeks boldness in vision, it loses all connection with the sort of conservative temper that might prove attractive to ordinary people upset with the disruptions that modern capitalism has produced in their lives. The legacy of Oakeshott and Strauss is not a rich body of ideas upon which contemporary conservatism can build a philosophical and political worldview. What they have bequeathed to conservatism is a spectacular contradiction—a reminder of the impossibility of conservatism in the modern age.

III.

NO WONDER, THEN, that so many contemporary conservatives spend so much of their time attacking liberalism. Nobody has undertaken that task with more energy and zeal than the British philosopher John Gray, whose *Post-Liberalism*, in its shift from defending Thatcher to defending the Greens, remains consistent in its distaste for the liberalism that lies in between, Gray's admiration for Isaiah Berlin notwithstanding. A recent American version of this familiar genre comes from the philosopher John Kekes.

As Kekes acknowledges in *Against Liberalism*, there is no one easily identifiable thing that he can oppose; there have been many liberal writers, some of whose ideas are distinct from others. Still, Kekes believes that liberalism does promote certain fundamental values, and that the most fundamental of them is autonomy, which "requires the kind of control that involves an unforced choice among alternatives that the agent has reasonably evaluated in the light of sufficient understanding of the significance of choosing one among the available alternatives."

The problem, for Kekes, is that evil exists in the world. If we allow individuals to be autonomous, then they may use their unfettered powers to do evil things. Under such conditions, liberals face an impossible dilemma: if they insist on autonomy, they enhance the amount of cruelty in the world, but if they demand the diminishment of cruelty first, they undermine their commitment to autonomy. Much of liberal thought, says Kekes, is devoted to unsuccessful attempts to avoid this dilemma. When liberals argue backward from the fact of evil to the view that anyone who commits such an act could not have been "really" autonomous, for no autonomous person would choose an evil course, they

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are attaching preconditions to agency which, whether they admit it or not, reduce the agent's autonomy to establish his own conditions, and in this way compromising themselves philosophically.

And other values prominently identified with liberalism face similar internal inconsistencies, in Kekes's account. Liberals believe that a person cannot be autonomous if his conditions of life are so unequal with respect to others that he is unable to develop his capacities for autonomy. Yet programs designed to help him achieve such equality, because they require takings from others, will reduce autonomy elsewhere. Worse, a commitment to equality means taking resources away from those whose lives manifest important virtues such as self-control and giving them to those whose lives, for better or worse, have been marked by vice. Hence liberalism, despite its self-proclaimed affinity with justice, is really unjust, since it is incapable of honoring the real meaning of justice: arrangements which allow individuals to get what they deserve. Finally, Kekes argues that liberals are correct to insist on the importance of pluralism, but that their single-minded pursuit of the goal of autonomy, which is viewed as trumping any and all other considerations, gives liberalism an excessively monist character.

KEKES BELIEVES THAT if one can simply point out the logical inconsistencies of liberalism, then its unworkability will become apparent. But political philosophies are not developed to meet tests of scrutiny developed by academic philosophers. Any comprehensive set of ideas whose purpose is to guide individuals and societies to do the right thing could, of course, strive for consistent principles; and if it achieved perfect consistency, it might, depending on one's taste, be attractive as a moral philosophy. But it would be useless as a political philosophy. The realm of politics is a realm of inconsistencies—between values, goals, strategies, persons, groups, states. If there were only one way to attain justice, liberty, or equality—or if those terms referred to the same good called by different names—then there would be no clash of people trying to achieve those ends, and therefore no need for all those institutions—parties, leaders, representative bodies, interest groups, and campaigns—that exist to adjudicate between competing ends.

This does not mean that we ought to celebrate political philosophies for their incoherence. But surely it is a primary fact for any philosophy of politics that human beings are complicated creatures who often desire mutually exclusive ends. For this reason, political philosophies developed to guide the actions of human beings need to be concerned with the actual consequences, and the peculiarities of human psychology, and the variations of time and place, and the likelihood of unanticipated consequences. Conservatism, at its most attractive, welcomes contingency over consistency. That is what makes it so odd for Kekes, in the name of conservatism, to criticize liberalism because its worldview leads to dilemmas that in turn demand political choices. To charge liberalism with incoherence in this sense is really to acknowledge its strength.

Still, there are some very unattractive varieties of contemporary liberalism, and Kekes has properly identified them. One winces, for example, to read Ronald Dworkin on abortion and euthanasia. He begins in good liberal fashion by appealing to moderation and reason, and he concludes by defining his principles in a way that works to the advantage only of those who support his version of what liberalism requires. His liberalism is a rigged liberalism. Yet the problem with such versions of liberalism is that they strive for precisely what Kekes demands of a political philosophy: a relentless commitment to principle. It may be true, as Kekes points out, that they fail to achieve that commitment; but what makes such versions of liberalism illiberal is that they try in the first place. Liberalism remains essentially an unfinished project. Its tenacity would be impossible without a certain protean quality that is bound to frustrate its critics. Against such a target, Kekes's bullets cannot even wound.

PAUL EDWARD GOTTFRIED, like John Gray and John Kekes, is a conservative who cannot help but include liberalism in the title of his book. *After Liberalism* begins, as do so many of these kinds of books, by acknowledging that the philosophy to which it is opposed takes many forms: once identified with individual freedom against the designs of the state, liberalism has become a defense of statism. Whatever form they take, however, all contemporary versions of liberalism, or so Gottfried wishes to show, are committed to a particular version of the good, and they are not averse to forcing people's adherence to that version when they are otherwise inclined. Sometimes this element of coercion is hidden; Rawls, according to Gottfried, never discusses power, and shies away from any realistic consideration of what form the difference principle should take in practice because "liberals do not want to be seen as imposing their will upon others." At other times, liberals are quite content to reveal their debts to statists such as Hegel, for they

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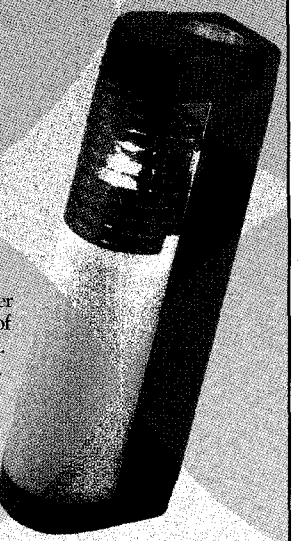

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have been the most explicit advocates for the emergence of an administrative class determined to insure obedience to its vision.

In recent years public administration has lost much of its luster, as it became identified with cumbersome public planning and governmental inefficiency. But other forms of liberal statism survive, as Gottfried reminds us. Liberals, for one thing, are strongly committed to a form of therapeutic politics. In theory, therapeutic ideals are pluralistic in the sense that, unlike forms of religious absolutism, they insist on a relativistic stance toward competing conceptions of the good. But in an age in which the state has gained the power that the church has lost, pluralism is a sham, for it will inevitably side only with those conceptions of the good which have the power of the state behind them—and those will be liberal conceptions.

Since the managerial state and the ideology of pluralism have been "the defining features of contemporary Western life," liberalism is, as Gramsci would have put it, hegemonic. It is true, Gottfried acknowledges, that people want what the liberal state provides; they have not exactly demanded a full rollback of the welfare state. Yet Gottfried has no doubts that the price of liberalism's hegemony is huge. For we have been taught, by thinkers from Cicero to Carl Schmitt, that the subject of politics is the majesty of power. It should reward the virtuous and punish the wicked. Its vast powers should be used sparingly but purposively to "shape and reshape people's lives." The liberal state, with its vast reach of powers, certainly shapes people's lives, but without the majesty, and without sufficient checks. Hiding its coercive capacities behind a language of caring, liberalism (this is Gottfried speaking) is both adrift and power-hungry, an unstable combination bound to carry out fantastic damage before its powers can be brought under control.

IN THEIR OWN WAY, Kekes and Gottfried are fighting the war between Little Conservatism and Big Conservatism that was begun by Oakeshott and Strauss. Gottfried writes in the apocalyptic tones of Big Conservatism. He makes no attempt to apply the tools of analytic philosophy to an examination of liberalism's incoherence, as if modern philosophy were a part of the problem with which liberalism is inevitably linked. Gottfried harkens back to an even older version of American conservatism than Straussianism, to an older tone (it is Richard Weaver's tone) of hopeless rage against the modern world. It is almost refreshing to read a writer so reactionary that he is willing to defend the authors of *The Bell Curve*, to explain away the anti-Semitism of Jean-Marie Le Pen, to describe the racist Southern League as a "populist-regionalist movement," and to characterize writers such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and myself as socialist.

Gottfried is so far outside the mainstream of conventional thinking that his book, for all its quirks, is actually quite interesting. He is correct to see Mill's *On Liberty* as a transitional document in the transformation of liberalism into an administrative force, for that short book does, alas, elucidate a "vision of a new clerisy crafting and directing a democratic order." Similarly, Gottfried quite rightly sees a tension in the writings of John Dewey between his proclaimed commitment to pluralism and his admiration for administrative planning. (It is not a contradiction that can be resolved by such Deweyan deceptions as faith in science.)

Unlike many American conservatives, moreover, Gottfried is multilingual, and he brings to the attention of his readers obscure European writers who are as offbeat as he is. Still, there is no way that Gottfried can overcome the fact that his book feasts off the liberalism it denounces. Citing the work of Stephen Holmes, Gottfried points out that liberalism survives by attacking its enemies. Yet Holmes's tone is the exception among liberals, whereas Gottfried's is the rule among conservatives. Finding fault with liberalism continues to substitute for the conservative understanding of the modern world that never seems to issue from the pens of conservative writers.

IV.

RECOGNIZING THAT something must be said about what conservatism is, John Kekes published *A Case for Conservatism* as a follow-up to *Against Liberalism*. As the reader might suppose from his philosophical criticism of liberal principles, Kekes believes, unlike Oakeshott, that it is possible to offer a systematic treatment of what it means to be a conservative. Yet Kekes's conservatism remains Little Conservatism, for in his effort to show that one can "articulate the basic beliefs of conservatism, show that they are true, and defend them against criticism," he robs conservatism of high historical and intellectual drama.

Liberals argue that rights, justice, and equality come first, while other conditions—prosperity, security, or order—come later, if at all. But conservatives, according to Kekes, believe in the value of all these goods. They do not establish one or two of them as always "trumping" the others. Instead they resolve conflicts among the values temporarily, based not on principle but on what works in specific circumstances to maximize all of them. This makes conservatives reflective rather than traditional. They cannot merely defend what exists, or what used to exist; they must show that certain sets of arrangements actually do work to permit as many people as possible to lead good lives. Kekes's conservatism is decidedly Humean. It does not set itself up in opposition to the Enlightenment. It understands itself as offering a more realistic way of achieving Enlightenment goals than theories of utopian perfectibility.

IN THEORY, Kekes continues, conservatism is open to many ways that good lives can be realized, but it is prepared to rule out of bounds possibilities that would make leading good lives impossible. Hence conservatism is a philosophy of limits. There will be certain freedoms that people will claim which, for conservatism to be possible, will have to be denied. Lest we assume that conservatism stands for repression, however, we first must recognize that what is permissible and what is not permissible exists on three levels. There are certain things that are universally true—for example, that murder or slavery so violate human dignity that they cannot be allowed. Other things are permissible or not, depending on societal considerations: what is not tolerated in some places—say, homosexuality—may be tolerated in other places. Finally, there is an individual level of morality. Each person, by participating with others around him, will or will not find a match between the forbidden and his own conceptions of good character. Since conservatism recognizes these three levels, Kekes argues, it is more committed to pluralism than is liberalism. "Conservatives can readily acknowledge that some particular beliefs hold on one level and go on to deny without inconsistency that it holds on another level." The philosophical incoherence that he denounces in liberalism magically becomes flexibility when it appears in conservatism.

As he would be the first to acknowledge, Kekes's version of conservatism is not one that all conservatives would share. If one considers the problem historically, indeed, very few would have shared this version, for conservatism developed as a defense of those social classes, customs, and ideals that were left in the dust by the rapid development of capitalism—and, eventually, the democracy which followed in its wake. "I think that wise and good men ought to rule those who are foolish and bad," wrote James Fitzjames

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Stephen in 1874. Those Strauss-like sentiments, it seems to me, constitute true conservatism, and Paul Gottfried, who quotes this sentence longingly, is a conservative because he admires them.

THINKERS WHO PREFERRED some kind of natural aristocracy to modern democracy could be more readily be found in Europe, where there was an aristocracy, than in the United States. In his useful anthology *Conservatism*, Jerry Z. Muller provides a well thought-out selection of classical texts, from the obvious choices of Hume, de Maistre, and Burke (though not Coleridge) to the more obscure. Among the latter was Justus Möser (1720–94), who, in arguing against a well-meaning Habsburg ordinance giving illegitimate children the same rights as legitimate ones, sounds eerily contemporary when he writes that "in some states more has been done for whores and their children in recent decades than for wives in the last millennium."

Muller does include some Americans in his book—James Madison, Rufus Choate, Irving Kristol—and he could have chosen others: Irving Babbitt or the Southern Agrarians. But in defending the notion that one can properly speak of an American conservatism, Muller also acknowledges the central fact that what American conservatism tries to conserve are the fruits of a constitutional system won through revolution. For this reason, the reader comes away from his anthology convinced that conservatism, if it means anything distinctive at all, means the defense of an order that never really took hold in the United States.

This impression is reinforced by Muller's introductory attempt to offer a definition of conservatism. Rooted more in sociology than in moral philosophy, Muller defines the essence of conservatism as "historical utilitarianism." The very survival of an institution is a reason for believing that it must serve some purpose which ought to be defended. Familiarity, as Muller puts it, breeds comfort, not contempt. Such a definition would seem to make little room for Hayek, for the market is a relatively young institution. Still, Muller points out, it evolves in a Darwinian sense as the most efficient mechanism for what it does, and in that sense it represents a form of historical utilitarianism. Once we understand the premium that conservatives place on historical survival, we can also understand why conservatives are skeptical of human reason. "If there you wish to conserve all, consecrate all": de Maistre's dictum has its own power. Institutions that have survived historically are likely to be revered only if we do not ask how they came into being and whether they still work.

Muller argues that conservatism is not necessarily an anti-Enlightenment phenomenon. There were, as he puts it, many Enlightenments, some more hospitable to conservatism than others. But his inclusion of de Maistre and thinkers like him also makes clear the degree to which conservatism finds unacceptable one particularly powerful form taken by modernity: the notion that popular majorities using their own mental powers can choose for themselves the political and social arrangements under which they will live. To assemble the best conservative writers, as Muller has done, is to raise the awkward question of whether elites in Western history have done enough to justify deference to their once-unquestioned privileges. Voters who have observed those elites lead the twentieth century into one disaster after another are not apt to vote for platforms which ask them to accept their own intellectual inferiority.

SINCE CONSERVATISM BEGAN as a protest against modern capitalistic democracy, it faces dilemmas as unresolvable as liberalism's dilemmas. The conservative dilemma, in Kekesian terms, is this. For conservatives to believe in any transcendental values against which actual societies ought to be judged, they have to assert the priority of first principles. But the first principles that conservatives have historically asserted—God's will, natural right, rule of the aristocracy, racial supremacy—all render them irrelevant to societies in which popular rule is viewed as a preciously guarded asset. Conservatism can be faithful to its historical roots, it can be intellectually elegant and bursting with philosophical integrity—and completely irrelevant to the actual societies which exist in the world today. Or it can be a significant force in the modern world, but only by becoming opportunistic, unwilling to assert its true agenda, and eventually transforming itself into the very liberalism it claims to detest.

Kekes's *A Case for Conservatism* is a valuable book because it demonstrates how far one self-described conservative is willing to go in the latter direction. Consider Kekes's treatment of the question of what moral beliefs and practices a society ought to permit. At his universal level, no problem exists, since a society seeking to make good lives possible would make illegal those practices that violate human respect and dignity at all times and in all places. But once we move from the universal level to the societal, the issue

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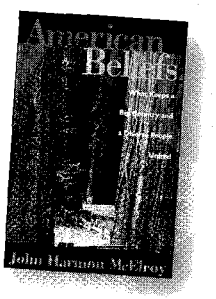

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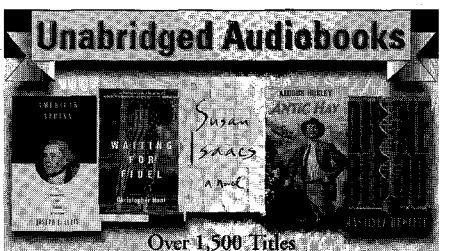

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becomes dicier. At that level, Kekes argues, the limits of what is permissible and what is not permissible ought to be guided by the moral traditions of the particular society in question, for those traditions have become a "second nature" deeply embedded in the consciousness of those who live in that society. Yet the traditions of some societies at some times have included barbaric, immoral practices.

May a conservative criticize the traditions of his society if those traditions violate human dignity? Kekes answers in the affirmative. He is not one of those who believes that if you like Sicily, you must like the Mafia. One can—though Kekes does not say how—separate out the bad from the good without damaging the tradition. And even good moral traditions, when they are "unresponsive to technological, demographic, or other changes in the non-moral circumstances of life," can be criticized, and so can traditions that "may be too inflexible to incorporate changes suggested by contact with other traditions." In contrast to those conservatives who insist on the need to reinforce virtue, Kekes would not have society abolish practices associated with "racists, anti-Semites, creationists, paedophiles, pornographers, and so forth." The proper conservative attitude toward those "who live according to their beliefs without violating any required conventions" is to tolerate them without extending them any respect.

KEKES'S LITTLE CONSERVATISM is so paltry that it is unwilling to assert any first principles at all upon which conservative morality can be grounded. And this reluctance extends not just to social traditions. Kekes is not a fideist; his conservatism is based on reason, not faith. One finds in *A Case for Conservatism* no defense of aristocracy as a way of life better able to inculcate conservative values than a society organized by the market. Indeed, Kekes does not even offer as a primary justification for conservatism the most liberal of possible justifications: meritocracy. All that is left is the sense that justice consists in rewarding people for working hard and obeying the rules, a principle which, according to Kekes, is violated by the redistributive policies of the modern welfare state. Thus a book that wants to uncover the "basic beliefs" of conservatism and to prove that they are "true" offers instead a menu designed to avoid the indigestible in favor of bland tastes unlikely to offend anyone except the most doctrinaire liberals.

The problem in all this is not that conservatism is philosophically incoherent, that it is forced to choose between its principles and programs that violate its principles. Ambiguity gives political philosophies, whether liberal or conservative, their character. No, the problem is that the dilemmas that structure conservative choices—especially among those writers, including contemporary Straussians, who have a bit more conservative spine than Kekes—are illusory. It is difficult to choose between liberty and equality, individual freedom and respect for law, oneness and diversity. Modern society forces upon its citizens one situation after another in which their basic beliefs are in conflict. But all these very real choices are between one liberal value and another. Americans are not asked to choose between a theocracy and a state committed to the separation of church and state; between legalizing slavery and abolishing it; between restricting the vote to property-holders and expanding it to all adults.

Both Gottfried and Kekes praise conservatism for its realism. It has, they claim, an essentially pessimistic outlook on the world. Yet the idea that conservatism is identified with a tragic view of life, and that liberalism is given to Candide-like optimism, is long gone. Since the tragic choices that modern people have to make are between competing liberal goods, it is liberalism which wrestles with the actual realities of politics in the modern world.

KEKES IS CAREFUL TO SAY that he did not write his book to influence conservative politics in the world around him, and Gottfried barely seems to care whether his version of conservatism could ever be made electorally appealing. Yet both books help us understand why conservatism never emerged as a true governing philosophy in the late twentieth century. Conservatism is a choice between two conceptions of the good one of which can never be chosen. It is not merely that we cannot go back to a system of Greek virtue or aristocratic privilege; we cannot even discharge a president who committed adultery. With no anchor on one side, conservatism lacks, as liberalism did in its nineteenth-century utopian visions, a sense of responsibility, a Weberian understanding of the ways in which power can obtain some objectives only by foreclosing others.

Kekes demonstrates the irresponsibility of having no real choices to make by redefining conservatism so that it is most things for most people. Gottfried, by contrast, offers a vision of conservatism so austere as to be of almost no interest to any people. Both responses betray an unease with the actual business of governance, and it may well be this that makes conservatism in modern form unappealing to large numbers of voters. They want to elect politicians who are cognizant of the realities of power. All too often conservatives, the first in the Western political tradition to write openly and honestly about power, fail to convince them that they can be responsible in the exercise of it. Fifty years after Oakeshott and Strauss, conservatism remains unable to decide what it really is about.

V.

THE BEST ARGUMENT for conservatism with which I am familiar comes from Virginia Postrel, the editor of *Reason* magazine. One should not assume that because Postrel's magazine is libertarian in origin, and because libertarians are sometimes thought of as being on the right, she writes in defense of conservatism. *The Future and Its Enemies* is a no-holds-barred attack on all forms of conservatism. But at a time when at least some conservatives have more in common with liberals than they are prepared to admit, it takes a true opponent of conservatism to reveal its potential strengths; and one cannot find a temperament more opposed to stasis than Postrel's.

Postrel divides up the way we think and act in the world into two categories. There is stasis and there is dynamism. Stasists seek to keep the world as it is; or, if they adhere to a reactionary version, to take the world back to some place it was. They come in all political colorations. Pat Buchanan, *The Weekly Standard*, Leon Kass, William Bennett, Ross Perot, and John Gray, all of whom are or were on the right end of the spectrum, are stasists. So are Benjamin Barber, Daniel Bell, Jeremy Rifkin, Al Gore, Christopher Lasch, *The Nation*, and Kirkpatrick Sale, all of whom are usually classified, in one way or another, as being on the left. Their urges, Postrel asserts, are uniformly repressive. It matters less what they want to ban or to limit—foreign competition, Wal-Mart, Big Macs, rock music, shopping malls, ski mobiles, pornography, genetic engineering, hedonism, or immigrants—than their certainty that they know the one best way to bring order to a chaotic world.

Dynamists are less well known, says Postrel, because most of them are doers rather than thinkers. They are the people who develop the Web, understand how species evolve, restructure companies, subvert government regulations, flout racial and ethnic categories, play beach volleyball, and invent new technologies. Opponents of inflexible systems are unlikely to write treatises, but their understanding of how the world actually works can be seen in the writings of Esther

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Dyson, Hernando de Soto, Tom Peters, and Jonathan Rauch. Dynamists, says Postrel, are "the party of life." Celebrating systems that have no closed ends, they recognize that rules must be kept as simple as possible because nobody can predict unanticipated consequences. They are not against order, but they are against design. Systems will find their own ways to reduce complexity, and we are better off allowing them to do so than imposing artificial restraints. A dynamic world is not built top-down based on expertise. It is created bottom-up based on local knowledge. There is no one best way. There is only trial and error.

POSTREL'S DYNAMIST MANIFESTO is, appropriately, a lively, engaging, and thought-provoking book. She is surely correct that temperamental factors such as the fear of change transcend the political categories of left and right. She is also correct to note that we seem to be going through something of an intellectual revolution: in biology, ecology, economics, computer science, and demography, scholars and theorists are voguishly emphasizing unplanned dynamic change.

Still, translating all this ferment into an appealing political outlook is no easy task. Postrel fails at it. For there is no compelling evidence that the way systems evolve in nature or in technology holds any lessons at all for understanding how societies grow or people develop. And to the degree that we know anything about the goods that people value, we know that temperaments not only vary between people, they vary within people. Nearly everyone wants closure about some things some of the time, which is why they are unlikely to give their assent to a vision of the world that asks them to take risks all the time in everything that they do.

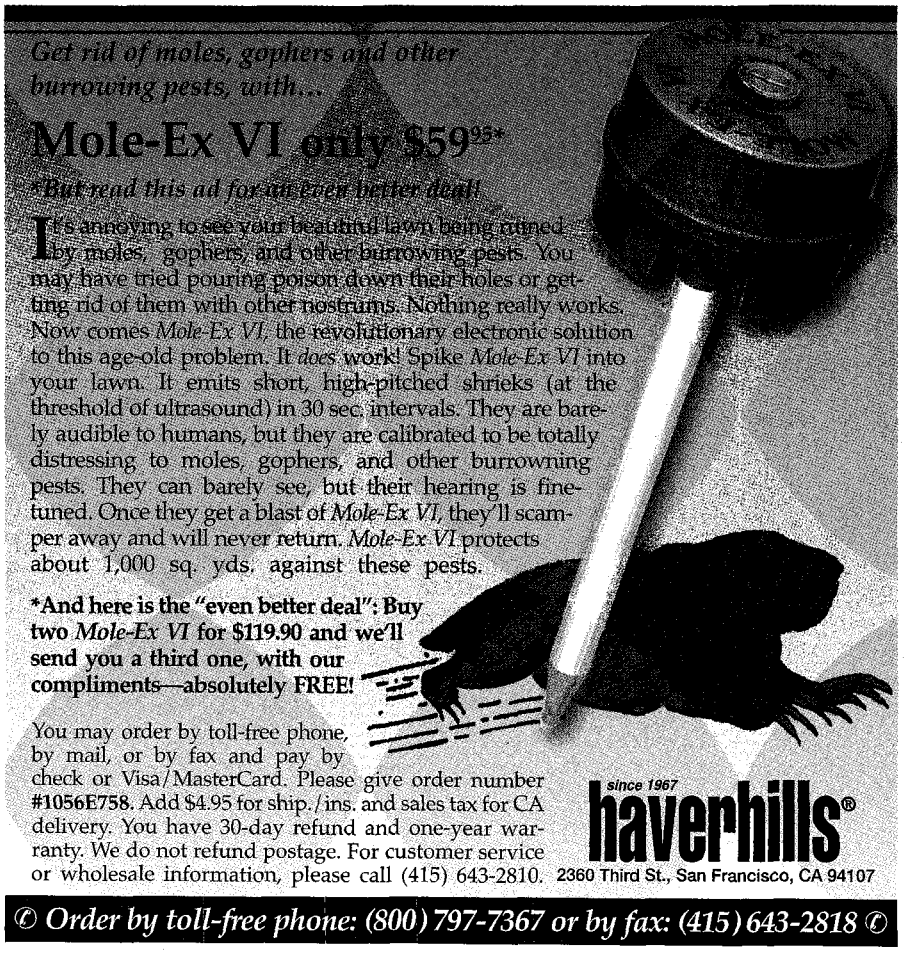
For a book designed to influence how people ought to live, there is relatively little in Postrel's book about how people actually do live. To be sure, Postrel cites Jane Jacobs and Joel Garreau on cities, but these are thinkers for whom cities are not just interesting places but also metaphors for the human condition. And that is the problem with Postrel's many examples of dynamism from the worlds of technology, nature, and migration: they are all metaphors. It is interesting to know that popular music or slang evolve because practitioners refuse to follow strict rules, and prefer to apply their own creativity and initiative to the materials available to them. But does this mean that we should pay no attention to time-honored conventions as we worship God, raise children, choose friends, search for moral principles, or decide what to read? Life as it actually is lived—by real people, in communities, bound through generations, searching for identity—bears little if any relationship to the ways in which species evolve or weather systems develop. Chaos theory is fine for numbers. As a principle for how humans ought to live, it is extremely unimpressive.

INDEED, IT MAY BE that people crave stability and predictability in some parts of their lives because other aspects of their lives have become unstable and unpredictable. Compared to the security sought by the generation that experienced world war and depression, younger Americans are certainly more open to innovation and circumstance. But they also hedge their bets. People may vote for Republicans in Congress to stimulate the economy, but then they also elect Democratic presidents to protect Social Security. They will invest in high-growth stocks, but they will also put something in government bonds. They may be open to sexual adventure, but they usually calm down and form lasting relationships. They still buy insurance and take out thirty-year mortgages when interest rates fall.

Postrel cites the economic historian Joel Mokyr's warning that periods of technological dynamism rarely last a long time: "Sooner or later the forces of conservatism, the 'if-it-ain't-broke-don't-fix-it,' the 'if-God-had-wanted-us-to-fly-He-would-have-given-us-wings,' and the 'not-invented-here-so-it-can't-possibly-work' people take over and manage through a variety of legal and institutional channels to slow down and if possible stop technological creativity altogether." Postrel calls this a "pessimistic" vision. I call it a realistic one. Human beings are temperamentally complex. They need consolidation as much as innovation. If they followed Postrel's advice, the time for consolidation would never come.

Conservatism—understood more as the Oakeshottian temperament than as the Straussian dramaturgy—enables us to consolidate the risks that are taken when we are younger. The young and the childless are rarely conservative, but they are often libertarians. Libertarianism is a political philosophy for Peter Pans, an outlook on the world premised on never growing up. It will never become a major political force because most of us do grow up. In Postrel's world, the future is the enemy of the stasists. This may be true for society as a whole; but for individuals, the future is the enemy of the dynamists. It is because we think we might have a future that we become reluctant to be risk-takers in the present.

And that is why the failure of conserva-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tive thinkers and conservative activists to develop a meaningful political philosophy is such a wasted opportunity. Any political philosophy in tune with the rhythm of life will appeal to Oakeshott's conservative temperament, whether it calls itself conservative or not. Conservatism, in this construction, has a natural advantage over its rivals. To the degree that liberalism leans toward libertarianism—as it does in Mill's *On Liberty*—it cuts artificially against the life-cycle; for the emphasis that Mill places on eccentricity and genius seems less attractive the more people look backward to the life that they have actually lived. We need conservatism because life is so rich that we become desperate to protect it against uncertainty.

All of this, I think, helps to explain why neo-conservatism became popular when it did. It was a movement of consolidation, the correction of a liberal course. The 1960s, after all, were truly a destabilizing period, in which institutions and traditions of all kinds were asked to justify themselves—and many could not. Since they represented a cultural revolution, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s demanded a stabilizing reaction, and this is what the neo-conservatives were the first to understand and to offer. One need not agree with everything that they said to acknowledge one's debt to the neo-conservatives for helping to stop certain destructive social trends in their tracks.

Yet our debt to the neo-conservatives is really our debt to liberalism. For if conservatism is an impossible ideal, then the best that conservatives can do is to force liberalism, when it goes awry, back in the right direction. The neo-conservative movement of the 1980s is one more confirmation of Louis Hartz's insistence on the ubiquity of American liberalism. Having performed a historical service to the liberal order of the United States, neo-conservatism retreated from the stage, the latest in a long line of modern conservative defeats. All these bitter attacks on liberalism only make one realize just how embedded in the American way of life liberalism truly is. We really have progressed, and we have no reason to regret it. ■

After Virtue

By KATHA POLLITT

Monica's Story
by Andrew Morton

(St. Martin's Press, 288 pp., $24.95)

All Too Human: A Political Education
by George Stephanopoulos

(Little, Brown, 456 pp., $27.95)

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE of the refusal of "the American people" to wax properly wroth over Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky and his attempts to conceal it by lying under (and over, around, and through) oath. This refusal is indeed one of the more remarkable features of this whole remarkable business. To their immense frustration, a solid year of sermons from a veritable seminary's worth of pundits and editorialists made no dent in the popular imperviousness. More surprisingly, neither did constant hyperventilation in the newsweeklies, the tabloids of print and television, shock-jock radio, and the Internet.

From the first headlines about Oval Office hanky-panky to the final impeachment vote, around two-thirds of the citizenry told pollsters that they disapproved of the Starr investigation and had no trouble distinguishing between the president's behavior as a man, which they deplored, and his performance as president, which they liked. Indeed, the president's ratings tended to rise whenever Kenneth Starr landed what should have been a particularly devastating blow. On August 2, 1998, following the announcement that Starr and Lewinsky had brokered an immunity deal in return for her testimony, Clinton scored a stratospheric 70 percent. On December 2, 1998, as the House moved toward impeachment, his approval rating was 60 percent. (Just before his resignation, Nixon's rating was 24 percent.) If the polls are correct, many more people sided with the president in his year of trouble than voted for him in either election.

You can see why this stolid resistance to outrage would drive "culture war" conservatives round the bend. For years they had been claiming to represent the "real" America, the hardworking Christian salt-of-the-earth majority who supposedly had been silenced by the meretricious "liberal elite." Then suddenly it seemed that every night on the evening news another crusty farmer was trading quips about the folly of impeachment with another no-nonsense waitress, while snowshovel-wielding retirees paused from digging out their cars to discourse on the beauty of forgiveness. William Bennett wondered out loud if he was out of touch, but it was a rare concession. For most conservative pundits, the People became the "sheeple," slaves to Dow Jones and Melrose Place.

MANY ORDINARY PEOPLE claimed to have no interest whatsoever in the whole sorry mess, and they blamed the media for foisting its particulars upon them. But interest, obviously, was not what was lacking. The public may have been sensible and even disgusted, but it was not exactly averting its gaze from the spectacle. *Somebody* was buying all those copies of the Starr report, and all those magazines with Monica on the cover; and was listening to MSNBC's endless natterfest, and appreciating the topical references in Jay Leno's nightly rundown of presidential sex jokes.

The scandal was not only a constitutional crisis, it was also major-major infotainment. It had sex, money, power, and glitz, a great plot—love! betrayal! scandal! surprise!—and an unforgettable cast of characters, with even a cameo for the bottom-feeding Larry Flynt. From the perspective of moralizing columnists bemoaning the death of honor and decency, however, people were interested in the wrong way. They followed the scandal the way they kept up with Gwyneth and Brad or Demi and Bruce, or Madonna's baby or Calista Flockhart's dress size or Hugh Grant's curbside adventures or the criminal doings of professional athletes. Like those other exciting narratives, the ever-expanding brouhaha raised all sorts of moral and social questions, enabled all

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sorts of feelings and stances—self-righteousness, ire, empathy, loyalty, identification, *schadenfreude*—without requiring that one do more than kibitz about the latest installment. Responding to a pollster is also a kind of kibitzing.

The lack of outrage lamented by William Bennett has many sources. It reflects ordinary Americans' accurate assessment of their relation to the rich and the famous and the powerful: their personal dramas are fun to follow, but they have no real effect on the world in which most people live. (This means, of course, that people were treating the president of the United States largely as a celebrity, from whom one expects such unreality and melodrama.) It reflects also a genuine transformation of values, from Puritanism to (for lack of a better word) liberalism—tolerant, situational, psychologically oriented—as well as a shrewd assessment of Clinton's right-wing enemies and their sudden concern for women in the workplace. Mostly, though, it reflects the triumph of politics as entertainment: as Leno put it, showbiz for ugly people.

This explains why people's looks were so important. Monica Lewinsky, and Bill Clinton too, were constantly ridiculed as fat; Hillary Clinton took to working out constantly; Paula Jones had a nose job and Linda Tripp a total makeover. One can only wonder what would have happened had Kenneth Starr looked more like George Clooney and less like the sort of man who spends his lunch hour in an adult book store. Real and potential book and movie and photo deals by major and minor figures played a prominent role in the story. Indeed, if Tripp is telling the truth, the evil fairy of the whole business (or, if you will, the unflinching guardian of American morals) was the flamboyant far-right literary agent Lucianne Goldberg, who thought Tripp might be able to write a best-selling White House tell-all if only she had the goods on tape.

It was Matt Drudge, the Hollywood reporter who fancies himself the Walter Winchell *de nos jours*, who most dramatically exemplified the transformation of politics into entertainment; he understood how to shape the story by playing it as gossip, funny, unsourced, slapdash, over the top. No matter how vehemently impeachment advocates denied it, the scandal was, after all, about sex, and this left the mainstream media caught between its self-image as society's watchdog and the new economic opportunities that had been discovered a few years earlier during the Simpson trial, when non-stop monomaniacal blather implanted Court TV and Geraldo Rivera in the national brain. Once again, journalists were placed in the ambiguous and slightly comic position of constantly insisting on the *gravitas* of the news that they and their organizations were playing as scandal and smut.

Monica Lewinsky and George Stephanopoulos
by Vint Lawrence for The New Republic

Now all those lucrative book deals are bearing fruit. Monica Lewinsky was first off the presses, with an as-told-to quickie written, oddly enough, by the British hagiographer of Princess Diana and Daniel arap Moi. The reviews have been awful, and the sales too: it has already dropped off the *New York Times* best-seller list. The only plot point that this silly book clears up is the reason why Lewinsky never sent the blue dress to the cleaners. (She's a slob.) Still, if publishing this book is what it takes for her to pay off her million-dollar-plus legal bill, it is hard to begrudge her.

This is a young woman, after all, who was the object of a solid year of worldwide cruel and sexist humor about the most personal aspects of her life: her figure (the *New York Post* dubbed her "the portly pepperpot" and regularly reported on her menu choices in restaurants), her Valley-girl speech patterns, her sexuality, and her supposed witlessness (as exemplified by this magazine's choosing "Bimbroglio" as the name of the scandal). Barred by Starr from speaking on her own behalf—about, for example, his browbeating treatment of her and her mother—Lewinsky had her image set in the public mind by the boorish and celebrity-drunk lawyer William Ginsburg, who humiliated her and sexualized her every time he opened his mouth. (He referred to his client as a "twenty-four-year-old girl" with an "imprisoned ... libido," and claimed to have kissed her inner thighs as a baby when he hadn't even known her then.) Besotted male journalists rhapsodized her with winks and nudges as Mona Lisa and Helen of Troy, and women conducted an open-mike debate about whether she was a victim, a vamp, or just a girl who wanted to have fun.

On February 6, when the nation finally had a chance to hear her speak for herself on videotape in the impeachment hearings, you could practically hear jaws dropping all over the country. Monica, it turned out, was not a gum-chewing moron or even a portly pepperpot. She was poised, articulate, charming, and nobody's fool (except Bill Clinton's). "This is my relationship," she admonished House Manager Ed Bryant when he asked her about her "salacious" encounters with the president. All that phony sympathy from the dirty old men of Congress, all those crocodile tears for the plight of sexually harassed working women, the whole madonna-whore way of looking at women which both sides in the impeachment fight deployed as it

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suited their purpose—all of it she politely and firmly rejected.

TOO BAD MONICA couldn't have left it there. But the show must go on. First came her ABC interview, in which she babbled away happily about her "sensuality" and allowed Barbara Walters, that desiccated harpy, to manipulate her into giving a lengthy explanation of phone sex. I felt sorry for Monica for allowing herself to be made into a spectacle. (A filmmaker I know insists that the camera was positioned to draw the viewer's eye to Lewinsky's mouth and tongue, making the interview an hour-long oral sex joke.) But I was angry, too. Does the moment never come when Hillary Clinton and Chelsea Clinton get to be real people with feelings to be considered—not just by Monica Lewinsky but also by Barbara Walters? (And, let's not forget, by Bill Clinton.) I was staggered the next day to find that at work the general verdict of the twenty-somethings was "Go Girl!", with much talk of Monica's courage in asserting her "agency." The brands of makeup that Monica had worn for her interview sold out immediately.

Monica's Story tries to cast Monica as an Oprah-era victim. The book enacts the same tradeoff of shame for fame that fuels afternoon TV. Why tell us about Monica's abortion, the result of an affair with yet another much older man during a hiatus in her affair with the president, except to satisfy the need for new revelations that would boost sales? And there is the same pop-psychological absolution: in this case, we are to believe that everything that happened was due to Monica's low self-esteem, and her low self-esteem was due to her weight. We hear much of Monica's childhood in beauty-conscious Beverly Hills. In grade school, kids called her Big Mac. She was the only one in her class not invited to Tori Spelling's birthday party. In high school, she was mocked and ostracized by the in-crowd. Her family and her therapists, too, saw her weight as a major problem, although in the photos included here she looks great, even radiant. And from all this, we are meant to understand, follows her willingness to put up with assorted nasty and condescending high school beaux, and with the famously awful high school teacher Andy Bleiler, who was her lover before and after his marriage and had his moment in the sun when, protective arm round the wife whom he had betrayed with Monica for years, he told reporters that Monica was an easy girl who had declared that she was going to the White House to get her "presidential kneepads." Later, Lewinsky and Clinton confide in each other about their humiliations as chubby children, and he risks all to call her on the official White House line ("I saw you in the hall today. You looked really skinny"). Indeed, the two are constantly reassuring each other about their figures. ("Oh, you don't have to do that—I like your tummy," Monica tells him when he sucks in his stomach the first time he takes off his shirt.) Food references leap out of the text like product placements in a Hollywood movie: pizza, cookies, Starbucks skim-milk lattes. Even her friendship with Linda Tripp has a culinary foundation: they begin by sharing diet tips, then bond as Monica cheers Tripp's struggle to lose sixty pounds at Weight Watchers. The rest is our history.

IT IS HARD TO TAKE THIS ALL as literally and as simplistically as Morton (and Lewinsky) mean us to take it. For a young woman who thinks that she is fat and unattractive and spends weekends in tears waiting for her married boyfriend to call, Monica was pretty assertive and demanding. She not only kept up her relationship with Bleiler after his marriage, she became the beloved babysitter of his children and a friend of his wife, and, in a bold but reckless gesture that nearly cost her her college diploma, she forged a signature to provide Bleiler a work-related alibi for their meetings. It takes a bit of attitude even to wear a thong, let alone to flash it at the president.

But if it is hard to see this story as just that of a victim of the shallow values of Beverly Hills, it is also hard to regard her, as some Monica revisionists have suggested, as a glowing young woman "comfortable with her sensuality," or to see her penchant for older married men as a testament to her maturity. I wouldn't deprive Monica of her "agency" for a minute; and although her situation was often discussed in terms of sexual harassment, there is no sense in which she was harassed by the president, though we might all devoutly wish that he, as the grown-up in charge, had told her to pull down her jacket and get back to her desk. Still, there are a lot of wealthy girls with big emotional problems out there, and Monica strikes me as a textbook case. These young women have the sense of entitlement and privilege that goes with their class, which makes them look spoiled and princessy even if in their personal relationships they are kind and warm; but emotionally they have been neglected. Monica's clueless mother, a total pushover with terrible judgment, set no limits. ("You're not the boss of me!" screamed the toddler Monica, and she was right.) Her remote, workaholic father set too many. Monica's big treat as a little girl was to be permitted to sit quietly and watch him do woodworking.

She was, Morton tell us, an excellent student, but when her grades slipped during the turmoil of her parents' protracted and bitter divorce, her father refused to pay for Boston University and consigned her to Santa Monica Community College, making him possibly the only Jewish doctor in America who wouldn't shell out for his child's education. You don't have to be a Freudian to see in Monica's frenzied and determined pursuit of older men—she *was* a bit of a stalker—a replay of her attempts to get her father's attention and approval. And showbiz being what it is, it wouldn't surprise me a bit to hear her explaining this very theory to Barbara Walters a few years from now.

It is certainly hard to muster any compassion for Clinton as he emerges from Morton's account. He really is the Big Creep, stringing the young intern along for sex and sympathy in the immemorial fashion of philandering husbands—hinting that eventually he may become available and then complaining about "the pain and torment that having an extramarital affair gave him as a married man." Meanwhile Monica, in the equally time-honored fashion of married men's girlfriends, finds herself all alone by the telephone. The whole thing was pretty banal. Even their "kinky" sex play is fairly common: fooling around with cylindrical objects that happen to be lying about, taking important business calls while having—or, as the president would insist, not having—sex. There must be millions of people in America whose amorous activities, if given the full Starr report treatment, would sound as juvenile and as strange. Monica's fatal misjudgment was not so much her choice of boyfriend as her choice of girlfriend. Without the fantastical Linda Tripp, Monica Lewinsky would be just another woman with a couple of unusual erotic episodes in her past, and a cigar would be just a cigar.

AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT, Bill and Monica's first tryst took place in George Stephanopoulos's office in the West Wing, and the ensuing events cast a big shadow over his memoir of his "political education." The book was originally conceived as the story of how "an ambitious and idealistic President of uncertain personal character grew in office," but that plotline had to be adjusted with numerous interpolations and afterthoughts in the rueful had-I-but-known mode suggested by the book's title. Stephanopoulos's career is another illustration of the fungibility of politics and entertainment: he has gone from White House aide and spinmeister to network talking head without missing a beat.

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Stephanopoulos's account of White House misadventures is just as self-serving as Lewinsky's account, but his book, while much better written, is a little harder to take. When Morton wants to tell us that Monica is really a serious person, he has to draw on her love of roses and shabby-chic furniture, on her magnanimous refusal to be jealous of her little brother even though his bar mitzvah was bigger than her bat mitzvah. You can practically see the writer cursing his agent and counting the minutes to lunch. But Stephanopoulos is his own Andrew Morton, and evidently he enjoyed the job a lot more.

He cannot tell us often enough what a boy wonder he is, the pride and joy of Greeks the world over—and modest, too. We hear all about his escapades as an altar boy, accompanied by an endearing photo of little George in his ecclesiastical garb. I suspect that he wants us to see him as a man whose cheek was pinched too often by adoring relatives: there is much mention of the burden of expectation that immigrant communities place on their young. Gradually, though, the image of a Greek-American boychick, an ever-so-slightly rebellious number-one son, morphs into the image of a kind of high-minded Uriah Heep. Stephanopoulos never tires of telling us how obsequious and manipulative he was with the short-tempered, long-winded Clinton, whom he portrays as in constant need of soothing and flattery, and whose messes he is forever tidying up. Stephanopoulos describes in detail how he massaged the media in the interest of damage control, and he wants credit for being clever at it, which would be fine, except that he also wants credit for feeling guilty about it, and for sacrificing his own qualms for the sake of the greater good of "our program."

But what was that program, exactly? Stephanopoulos gives us to understand that he was on the liberal side of the White House, but you don't get the impression that his own beliefs mattered much to him. They certainly mattered less than his efficacy at the arts of political imagery and calculation: how a given course of action can be framed for the media or for the day-to-day partisan fray. To cite one example: Stephanopoulos defends Governor Clinton from the charge of expedience regarding his decision, during the New Hampshire primary campaign in 1992, to allow the execution in Arkansas of Ricky Ray Rector, a seriously brain-damaged black man. He describes in detail spending the evening of the execution with Clinton in the Governor's Mansion,

You deserve a factual look at...

"The Arabs of Israel"

Are they a "persecuted minority?"

The world is much focused on the developments in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip, in which, for the most part, Israel has relinquished sovereignty and authority to the Palestinian Authority (P.A.). Ninety-eight percent of the Arabs in these territories live now under the rule of the P.A. There is some question whether or not they are better off than before. But many believe that Arabs in Israel itself are a "persecuted minority."

What are the facts?

Israel is a Democratic Country. Israel is an open, pluralistic, and egalitarian society. Different religions, cultures, and social traditions coexist. Protection of such diversity is embedded in Israel's traditions and confirmed by the government. About 20% of the population (over one million people) are non-Jews, most of them Arabs, and some Druze. Like all other Israeli citizens, they have full rights to vote and to hold elective office. Both Arabs and Druze hold seats in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. Every Knesset, since the founding of the State in 1948, has had Arab and Druze members. All transactions in the Knesset are simultaneously translated into Arabic, and Arab members may address the Knesset in Arabic.

"Contrary to propaganda...the Arabs in Israel enjoy every civil right and have the same status under law as Jewish Israelis."

It is official policy of the Israeli government to foster the language, culture, and traditions of the Arab minority, in the educational system and in daily life. Arabic is an official language in Israel, together with Hebrew. Israel's Arabic press is the most vibrant and independent of any country in the region. There are more than 20 Arabic periodicals. They publish what they please, subject only to the same military censorship as Jewish publications. There are daily TV and radio programs in Arabic. Arabic is taught in Jewish secondary schools. Israeli universities are renowned centers of learning in the history and literature of the Arab Middle East.

Education and literacy of the Arab population in Israel is as high as and probably higher than in any Arab country. The literacy rate among Israeli Arabs is 95%, virtually the same as for Israeli Jews. There are close to 1,000 Arab educational institutions in Israel, with about 300,000 students—just about 25 times as many as in 1948, when the State of Israel was created. Ninety percent of Arab children attend school, probably the highest ratio of any Arab population anywhere. Israeli universities and technical institutions are freely available to the Arabs. About 5,000 Arab students attend such schools.

Israeli Arabs Enjoy Full Equality in Law and in Fact. All religious communities in Israel enjoy the full protection of the State. Israeli Arabs—Moslems, as well as many Christian denominations—are free to exercise their faiths, to observe their own weekly day of rest and holidays, and to administer their own internal affairs. Each community has its own religious councils and courts, and has full jurisdiction over religious affairs, including matters of personal status, such as marriage and divorce. The holy sites of all religions are administered by their own authorities and protected by the government. In contrast to the non-Israeli Arab world, Arab women in Israel enjoy the same status as men. Israeli law grants women equal rights, including the right to vote and to be elected to public office, prohibits polygamy, child marriage, and the barbarity of female sexual mutilation. It has thus vastly changed the status of women, to far above that of any country in the region. Israeli health standards are by far the highest in the Middle East. Israeli health institutions are freely open to all Arabs, on the same basis as they are to Jews.

There is, however, one difference between the "rights" of Arabs and Jews in Israel. Israeli and Druze men are required to do three years of military service and then serve one month every year until they are 50. Arabs are exempted from military duty and are not required to perform any compensating civilian service. Since the surrounding Arab states, with the exceptions of Egypt and recently of Jordan, are the avowed enemies of Israel and are dedicated to its destruction, this exemption is granted by the Israeli government to its Arab citizens, so as to spare them conflicts of loyalty and conscience.

Contrary to propaganda and to what many believe, the Arabs in Israel are full-fledged citizens, enjoy every civil right, and have the same status in law as Jewish Israelis. In summary, they enjoy the highest standards of living and liberty of any Arabs in the Middle East. It is instructive and sobering to compare the condition of the approximately one million Arabs in Israel with that of the pitiful remnants of Jewry in Arab countries. Jews have been living in Arab countries for almost 2,000 years. Under Arab dominance, they were always third-class citizens and subject to harassment and persecution. There were about 900,000 Jews in Arab countries in 1946—now there are fewer than 25,000. But there are now over one million Arabs in Israel, as against 150,000 in 1948—an almost seven-fold increase. These figures alone would seem to prove that things can't be all that bad for Arabs in Israel.

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"a moment out of time," in which their ruminations on capital punishment are periodically interrupted by bulletins from the prison, where doctors were having a hard time finding a vein in Rector's arm. Clinton, he writes, really does believe in the death penalty, after opposing it early in his career. And the fact that the execution would deflect attention from the Gennifer Flowers scandal and further burnish Clinton's credentials as a non-bleeding-heart Democrat? Well, that was just a lucky break. Interestingly, Stephanopoulos never mentions that Clinton actually returned to Arkansas expressly to oversee the execution, and to be seen doing so. In his conflicted way, Stephanopoulos is still spinning for his former employer. He even praises Clinton's "stoicism," which "comforted" him, as if they were the ones facing extinction and not the hapless Rector.

In Stephanopoulos's version of his tenure at the White House, his own good advice to Clinton is undermined at crucial moments by the stiff-necked First Lady, at whose feet he lays many of the major mistakes of the first four years: mishandling the press, especially in the matter of the death of Vince Foster; holding on to documents in Whitewater, Travelgate, and Filegate; and bungling health-care reform. Stephanopoulos soft-pedals his own major media blunder, which was to have served as a major on-the-record source to Bob Woodward, whose book *The Agenda*, which appeared in 1994, portrayed a disorganized and amateurish White House lurching from crisis to crisis. Whether Stephanopoulos's cooperation was, as he claims, an attempt to control Woodward's story, or, as Hillary Clinton believed, sheer disloyalty, it marked the turning point in Stephanopoulos's fortunes.

That his fortunes rested on such an incident suggests the extent to which the Clintonites, all of them, were obsessed with controlling their image. Possibly, though, Stephanopoulos's memoir portrays a media-obsessed administration because its author is a media-obsessed man. *All Too Human* may be a bit like one of those children's books written from the point of view of Paul Revere's horse or Ben Franklin's pet mouse. Surely somebody in the Clinton administration was thinking beyond the next issue of *Newsweek*? On second thought, don't answer that.

Stephanopoulos reserves his true hatred for his rival Dick Morris, who evokes some of his liveliest prose: "He was a small sausage of a man encased in a green suit with wide lapels, a wide floral tie, and a wide-collared shirt. His blow-dried pompadour and shiny leather briefcase gave him the look of a B-movie mob lawyer, circa 1975—the kind of guy who gets brained with a baseball bat for double-crossing his boss. But his outfit was offset by the flush of power on his pasty face. I knew *that* look—the afterglow of a private meeting with the leader of the free world." Morris, he claims, played on the president's fear of losing the election in 1996, and manipulated the president much more successfully toward the right than Stephanopoulos ever had in the other direction.

It never seems to occur to Stephanopoulos that Clinton followed Morris's unprincipled advice to "triangulate"—to abandon his fellow Democrats and to co-opt whatever the Republicans offered that had good poll numbers—because he, too, is unprincipled, or because those Republican stances (as exemplified, say, by the Personal Responsibility Act) *were* his principles, of which "our program" was merely a slightly more liberal incarnation. One thing you can say for Clinton, he has a magical ability to inspire in others an intense desire to make excuses for him. If only he hadn't thrown me over for that ridiculous sausage person! That seems to be Stephanopoulos's plaint. The book ends with the poignant scene of the apostate aide returning to the White House for a visit, agonizing over whether to drop in on the president, and deciding against it.

If political memoirs are a rough draft of history, then Clinton's profile will certainly never adorn Mount Rushmore. But did Stephanopoulos betray the president by writing this book? There is certainly something distasteful about the whole project. Lewinsky, after all, doesn't owe the president a thing. Indeed, she offered him more loyalty than he deserved. But Stephanopoulos was Clinton's creature: the president made him influential, rich, and world-famous. You don't have to like Bill Clinton (and who can?) to feel that there is something small and mean about producing this downstairs view of the White House before he has even left office. What ever happened to honor among thieves? Maybe George and Monica can discuss all this with Dick Morris on "Meet the Press," or turn it into a skit on "Saturday Night Live," where Monica's recent appearance scored huge ratings. That's entertainment! ■

The Fanatic

By David Thomson

Truffaut
by Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana translated by Catherine Temerson

(Knopf, 462 pp., $30)

Scrambling to escape an unhappy childhood, François Truffaut discovered the beguiling darkness known as the cinema. No other education meant as much to him as seeing two or three films every day. He was ten years old in 1942, and so those first ardently watched films were French; but as adolescence and adulthood overtook the slight boy, there came the great raptures of American movies, the ultimate dreams, borne on the wings of victory and liberation. From his heady point of regard, and with the strange intimacy of having Bogart and Bacall, say, so close in the smoky dark, Truffaut was always warmly inclined toward America. Later, America loved his shyness, his vulnerability, the sudden smiles that could transform his gaze, and the instinct for sentiment that is there in nearly all his films, without being sentimental.

He became a critic—a very good one, actually, and one of those young men notorious for having seen more movies than anyone else alive. It was his generation—in France, and then all over the world—that said there could be no moderation about cinema, no room even for the rest of life. You had to see everything; you had to live in the dark. It was the only way to be enlightened. And so zealots who knew little about anything except the camera's light fell into the habit of

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lecturing older, wiser people about anything and everything that might come under the span of "life studies." What nuisances!

Truffaut made many enemies. Most of the older generation of French filmmakers—all except the few who were "saved" (Renoir, Gance, Cocteau, Becker, Bresson, a few others)—reckoned that he deserved a spanking. Yet Truffaut was confident that he had learned life from American films, no matter that he hardly understood English. Authoritarian about so many matters, he was as pale as any creature confined to the dark. This fundamentalist of film was so aggressive in his twenties, and so dismissive of his elders, that he was refused press credentials at the Cannes Film Festival.

Then, as if to confirm that life could work like a movie, Truffaut went back to Cannes with his first feature film. The year was 1959, and the picture was *The 400 Blows*. The director appeared with his kid actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, who played a boy not very different from François himself. They were feted, and the picture was acclaimed. It won the prize for best direction. Foreign sales soon earned twice what it had cost, and when it opened in Paris a month later it was a huge hit. All over the world, the term "*Nouvelle Vague*" became common—and the central image of the New Wave was the sharp, sad, questioning face of Léaud, halted at the end of his run for freedom by the sea itself, turning, frozen, staring at the camera, as if to say, "It's my life, damn it."

Truffaut may not stand up to every test of history. Jean-Luc Godard and Jacques Rivette—his contemporaries as critics and filmmakers—may be more historically significant. But Godard and Rivette disdained, or were oblivious to, a perilous quality that is vital to cinema. That quality is charm. In the pages of magazines such as *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Arts*, Truffaut had been a devastating analyst of films (in ways that belied his sparse formal education) and a terrific judge of talent. But given a camera, and given the flesh and blood and nervous energy of real actors, he seldom seemed as intellectual or as critical. Instead, he sought momentary gesture, tone of voice, shades of feeling, and piercing insights. He was a natural entertainer—rather in the way of American models such as Hawks, Hitchcock, Wilder, or Cukor, and his obvious French patron Renoir.

Truffaut had been a political figure in 1968, like all the others. He defended Henri Langlois's reign at the Cinémathèque, when that great zealot for film was challenged by the French bureaucracy after he had protected movies against time, neglect, and Nazi occupation. Truffaut also helped to close down that year's Cannes festival. Still, it was impossible for Truffaut to follow Godard's creative path toward increasingly austere and dialectical films made for small audiences. To the end of his days, Truffaut wanted to play well—not just for the money, though he was not averse to it, but for the proof of popularity and for the shared sentiment. And because he could not credit a film that was not, in the end, a gift to its audience.

COURTESY ALFRED A. KNOPF

François Truffaut and Alfred Hitchcock, 1962

Maybe his talent, or his stamina, faltered. Long before the end, his ignorance of real life—and his impatience with it—caught up with him, so that he was making movie exercises, repeating himself. His was not a talent that went on developing, in the manner of Renoir, across decades and continents. But Truffaut the charmer, the man of feeling, was lucky. Just as the New Wave began to go into tidal reversal, he made its greatest hit, *Jules and Jim*, in 1962, a picture that celebrates France's greatest actress of the time, Jeanne Moreau, as well as the primacy of acting in all films. Ten years later, after several failures, he came back with *Day for Night* (or *La Nuit Americaine*), which won the Oscar for best foreign film. It was a jubilant, artlessly young endorsement of the wonderful untidiness of filmmaking and the strange, enclosed liberty of all film crews, which just about escapes being awestruck or simple-minded.

And after that? Well, there was luck in sadness, too. For Truffaut died young, in 1984, when he was only fifty-two. A brain tumor swept him away with merciful speed, but not before he had a new child with Fanny Ardant, his last actress. His films had often asked the question that bespoke the heady mood of first love (and of watching all women from voyeurism's dark): are women magic? Well, who knows. But since Truffaut's experience of the female sex was so much confined to actresses, we must settle for the intoxication that could hardly work without falling in love with his leading ladies.

Now, fifteen years after his death (and three years after its first publication in France), there comes a diligent and very useful life of Truffaut; and its publication coincides with a retrospective of the films that is touring the United States. Such a book was planned once by Richard Roud, for years the artistic director of the New York Film Festival, and a friend to Truffaut since the start of his career. Roud died with the work far from done, and so the task has fallen to two men with nat-

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ural qualifications, Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana. They are both involved with *Cahiers du cinéma*, and Toubiana did a pretty good documentary film on Truffaut called *Stolen Portraits* that came out in 1993. They won the confidence of Truffaut's family—his ex-wife Madeleine (who had stayed loyal despite his wildness), and his two children by her, Laura and Eva. They have given the authors free access to the extensive Truffaut archives, where we discover that just as Truffaut was a real writer as a film critic, so he was a dedicated letter-writer and a conscientious believer in friendships. It turns out that the affection and the intimacy that mean so much in his films are a highlight of this excellent record of his emotional life.

Above all, this biography succeeds as a portrait of a thwarted, and prolonged, childhood. Born on February 6, 1932, in Paris, Truffaut was the son of an unmarried Catholic woman named Janine de Montferrand. The child was named François Roland; he was placed with a wet-nurse, "and would only rarely see his mother before the age of three." Late in 1933, Janine married Roland Truffaut, who acknowledged the boy as his son. In fact, he was not the biological father. Many years later, with the help of a private detective, Truffaut discovered that his true father was almost certainly Roland Levy, a Jew and a dentist. And so one night Truffaut went to Belfort where Levy lived, watched him come out of his house for an evening promenade, followed him—and then turned away. As the authors of *Truffaut* say, "he felt he couldn't disrupt a man's habit with his sudden revelation that he was his son. That night, he took a room in town and isolated himself in a movie house where they were showing Chaplin's *Gold Rush*."

That shyness and the trepidation are as characteristic of Truffaut as the air of melodrama and the urge to see a movie rather than take action. Perhaps, after all, Levy was The Wrong Man, as Hitchcock would have put it; perhaps at this late date there was no chance of Bringing Up Baby, as Hawks would have put it. Maybe a foundling had to realize that life was The River (that's Renoir) that never stopped passing by and that hardly noticed distress on its banks. Truffaut often saw himself not only as a contributor to the collected narratives of film, but also as a figure in them. Even as a teenager—and an outcast from his family—he had thought of himself as "the Jew." It was true that, at the age of thirteen, he had been moved by documentary footage of the concentration camps. But more generally he had always felt like an outsider in his own family. So it was another kind of self-dramatization. Thus the discovery of the fact of his Jewish origins was confirming; and perhaps he feared disturbing its fictive rightness.

For years he lived with a grandmother, an important figure who taught him the pleasure of reading great books. Thereafter—as is shown fairly accurately in *The 400 Blows*—he was the left-at-home discard as his father went mountaineering while his mother had love affairs. This led to rebellion and delinquency, to scrapes with the law and the threat of being sent away to reform school. François believed that appropriate love had passed him by. He found it with male chums (this is beautifully rendered in *The 400 Blows*), and then with prostitutes and actresses—in situations where transience (the river's unstoppable passage) was essential to the transaction. It is a shortcoming of this book that it never really spells out how Truffaut treated his daughters. A victim in life, a spokesman for children's rights, as well as the frequent director of films about children: was he a good and attentive father, or the helpless transmitter of the neglect that he had suffered?

Nothing in *Truffaut* is handled better than the tumultuous mood of French film buffs in the 1950s, the great yellow-cover days of *Cahiers du cinéma*, with its reclaiming of old masters and new energy; the near parental role that the critic André Bazin played in the difficult years of Truffaut; as well as the friendships and the rivalries among all the busy currents that would make up the *Nouvelle Vague*. It is worth noting that de Baecque is working on a history of the New Wave itself—a grand project—in which the ups and downs of the Truffaut-Godard relationship may be pursued. As it is, there is nothing in this book more remarkable than Truffaut's termination of that friendship in the 1970s, when Truffaut felt that Godard had become not just an esoteric filmmaker but a snob, a money-grubber, and a treacherous friend. In Parisian film circles, winning a battle of the arrondissements can mean more than international success or failure.

Truffaut wrote a great deal in the 1950s, and he was especially drawn to extensive interviews with great directors. Sometimes these old-timers (especially the Americans) were so delighted to be hauled out of obscurity that they cheerfully nodded assent to ecstatic questions that they hardly comprehended. In dealing with America, the young French critics adopted an attitude to direction—the *politique des auteurs*—that had never obtained in Hollywood. It is worth noting that only one of the New Wave generation, Louis Malle, ever worked with anything close to comfort in Hollywood. Truffaut's only excursion to the movie kingdom that he so cherished was to play a wide-eyed scientist in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. But Truffaut's interviews were a definition of directing that—one day—he wished to claim. And so in the early 1960s, as he

Visiting the Master

Don't follow me, I'm lost,
the master said to the follower
who had a cocked pen
and a yellow pad.

But I live for art, the follower said.
I need to know some of its secrets,
if not its rules.

I'm lost, said the master,
I ask only for your forbearance
and a little help with the rent.

The follower realized he'd caught
the master at a bad time.
I'll come back next week, he said.

He knew the master had told others
that over a lifetime
the word "autumn" shouldn't be used
more than five or six times,
and that only a fool
confuses activity with energy.

The follower came back the next week.

The master said, go away.
It all begins elsewhere, apart from me.
Both sunshine and shadow, these days,
oppress me. A good woman
is hard to keep.

The follower thought he understood.
You mean, he said, privation
is the key?

Oh, return to zero, the master said.
Use what's lying around the house.
Make it simple and sad.

Stephen Dunn

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began to be known as a director, Truffaut asked Hitchcock if he would collaborate on a book-length conversation about his whole career.

Hitchcock was delighted, for he never felt that he had been recognized properly in the English-speaking world. They sat down for a week in the summer of 1962 (the elaborate and richly illustrated book was not published until 1966), when the director was between *The Birds* and *Marnie*, and had only lately enjoyed the greatest success of his life with *Psycho*. The shy Hitchcock was ready to burst free from his chrysalis. As if the interview, and Truffaut's adoration, gave him confidence and even pomp, Hitchcock plunged deeper into an obsessive relationship with his actress Tippi Hedren, and strove to remake her as Grace Kelly. Thus he acted out the story of his great film *Vertigo* (a classic now, but a failure when it was released in 1958). It was as if a man trained in ironic self-effacement had been dangerously liberated by his young admirer's emotionalism—yet drawn to tragedy, too, for Hitchcock was never the same man afterward.

SURELY THE ENCOUNTER affected Truffaut, too. By inclination, he was a *petit* humanist: he loved small stories about human truths, and he believed in people to the extent that he could see them as actors. He liked real locations, spontaneous behavior, natural light, life-like talk, and a spirit of improvisation in filmmaking. But as he questioned Hitchcock, he saw a nearly opposite approach—intense preparation, contrived camera angles foreseen and storyboarded in advance, actors who were sometimes just figures in a diagram, and the yielding of life, naturalism, and reality to that thing called "suspense." What it amounted to, for Truffaut, was a struggle between father-figures. Should he go the way of Renoir or the way of Hitchcock? For a real orphan, it was not a small issue.

The 400 Blows, *Shoot the Piano Player*, and *Jules and Jim* were Renoiresque films, no matter that *Shoot the Piano Player* was adapted from a pulp thriller novel by David Goodis. *Two English Girls*, which appeared in 1971, was in the same vein, and it came from another novel by Henri-Pierre Roché, the author of *Jules and Jim*. Indeed, the exquisite Welsh scenes in *Two English Girls*—with a gray stone house on a cliff overlooking the sea—may be the best movie evocation we are ever going to get of Renoir's beautiful novel *The Notebooks of Captain Georges*, one of those books beloved by filmmakers that never quite get made.

But then Truffaut began to make Hitchcock films—*The Soft Skin* (1964), *The Bride Wore Black* (1967), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) (a disastrous visit to England and the English language, and a ruinous breakdown in his relationship with the actor Oskar Werner, who had been so good in *Jules and Jim*), and *Mississippi Mermaid* (1969). Those films were far less successful, with critics and at the box office, and often they seem like willed ventures in which Truffaut is smothering his own impulsiveness.

The Bride Wore Black, for example, is an arid contrivance in which Jeanne Moreau feels confined and depressed. *Mississippi Mermaid*, now showing in a restored version that makes its strange story easier to follow and to be moved by, is the one "Hitchcock" film, I think, that deserves a place alongside Truffaut's best work. Even so, the "obvious" casting of Jean-Paul Belmondo and Catherine Deneuve did not pay off in screen chemistry. Truffaut usually loved his actresses, but in some cases his actors felt hurt or overlooked. There was an affair with Deneuve (she does not enjoy having it reported), and Belmondo seems to have felt excluded from the rapturous pact that was making the film. His exclusion shows, and damages the film's fascinating set-up—a rich man on the island of Réunion who arranges a mail-order marriage, only to discover that his bride has been replaced by an adventuress who will rob and abandon him. She turns out to be one of those magical whore-women of whom movies never seem to tire.

LATER, IN 1977, Truffaut made a film called *The Man Who Loved Women*. But by then the love was no longer palpable or pleasant. As played by the chilly Charles Denner, the man seems a cold-blooded collector, a womanizer imprisoned by his own fantasies. It leaves one wondering how far Truffaut (an enthusiastic self-analyst) ever reflected on his own chronic collection of actresses and the brief "professional" affairs that went with films: Marie Dubois, Alexandra Stewart, Jeanne Moreau, Marie-France Pisier, Françoise Dorléac, Julie Christie, Claude Jade, Deneuve, Kika Markham, Jacqueline Bisset, Isabelle Adjani, Fanny Ardant. (And others.) Of course, such brief pairings are not uncommon in the film world: *Day for Night* shows the giddy dating-game aspect of any shoot.

Still, the story reads drearily; the reader picks up the sad repetition, and the self-delusion that goes with it, more than the infatuation or the sexy high that can energize a movie. Moreover, while there are outstanding female performances in Truffaut films—Moreau in *Jules and Jim*, Kika Markham and Stacey Tendeter in *Two English Girls*, and even Bernadette Lafont in the minor *Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me*—others are flat or overdone. No actress ever gave more than one fine performance for Truffaut. He could grow bored with the women, though he never appreciated the monotony or the closed-off self-regard in Jean-Pierre Léaud as he grew older.

BUT THERE WAS ALSO a marriage, entered into and ended while he was still young, with Madeleine Morgenstern, the daughter of a film financier whose money helped François get his start. The young director found it painful reconciling himself with that need, and he never quite worked out whether he loved Madeleine or despised himself for using her. There were times when his romantic agonizing could be as wearisome to others as the hysteria of his character Adèle H. But Truffaut hardly seemed to notice. Readers must judge for themselves. De Baecque and Toubiana have been thorough and fair in assembling the evidence, and it is plain that they esteem Truffaut as a minor master.

I am not sure how long that status will last. The final half a dozen films are not very good. *The Last Metro* (1980) (no matter that it stars Deneuve and Depardieu) is too close to the old-fashioned entertainments that Truffaut had once mocked from directors of the old guard. *The Green Room* (1978), a determined meditation on death, is Truffaut's great departure from charm, and the most interesting of the last films. Was he ill before he knew it, or tired? Was he running out of drive or need? The essentially adolescent filmmaker is a figure we know all too well in America; but in one's late forties, there is no decent way of remaking old films. One has to have a more primary access to life and to story.

Never mind. Truffaut had his moment, 1959, and it will last in history just as *The 400 Blows* and *Jules and Jim* will always be "famous" films. *Two English Girls*, I think, is close to greatness. It is a film full of warring voices, bold gestures, and shy secrets, made out of fragments in a mysteriously satisfying mosaic, with a central character who can never make up his mind whether he is alive or a figure in a book. Such melodramatic indecision was hard to take in life, and it stands as a warning to later generations resolved to be interested in nothing except the movies. Yet Truffaut had a saving grace: he was a son of the lost age that believed that the most special effect in the dark was the human face, in close-up, as its mind shifted. ■

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Parallels

TO SAY THAT MY BOOK, *THE PITY of War*—a history of World War I—has touched some raw nerves in Germany would be an understatement. Most of the outcry has arisen at my suggestion that, if Britain had stayed out of World War I, not only would Germany have won the war, but this might have been a good thing. In *Die Zeit*, the eminent historian Wolfgang Mommsen accused me of having written an "exculpation of the German policy of those years," and even of propagating a new "stab in the back theory" about the outcome of the war. I was, he alleged, providing "grist to the mills of those who have not yet forsworn German dreams of great-power status." Even favorable German reviewers have been scandalized by the parallel I draw between German war aims in 1914 and the present European Union. This, in the view of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, is a "provocation."

INDEED IT IS. BUT CONSIDER THE WORDing of this part of the Imperial German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg's famous September Program: "We must create a *central European economic association* through common customs treaties, to include France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Austria-Hungary, Poland, and perhaps Italy, Sweden, and Norway. This association will not have any common constitutional supreme authority, and all its members will be formally equal, but in practice will be under German leadership and must stabilize Germany's economic dominance over *Mitteleuropa*." Is there not sufficient resemblance between this proposal and the present European Union to justify a tentative (and qualified) comparison? Not in the eyes of the German academic and political establishment. To persuade modern Germans that Europe is "in practice" under their leadership is a hopeless task. It is not that they are trying to spare French feelings when they claim that their goal is "a European Germany, not a German Europe"; they genuinely believe that European integration is an antidote to, rather than a vehicle for, German power. No matter that Germany has for years been the single biggest net contributor to the EU budget; that Germany got the European Central Bank located in Frankfurt; or that Germany ensured the imposition of a "stability pact" to cap the budget deficits of the states that joined the single currency. When you cite these and other examples of German preponderance, they just smile regretfully as if you are stark, staring mad.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER, DEEPER REASON that comparisons between today's Germany and the Germany of the past are unacceptable. Many Germans today think and talk as if there are simply no connections (other than the purely geographical) between their country and the old Germany. The old German Reich was a uniquely wicked state; hence the tendency of German historians since the 1960s to compare Hitler's Germany with that of the Kaiser—same war aims, same social structure, same extreme nationalism and militarism. The corollary of this belief is the conviction that Germany today is literally another country. Even when there are flickers of the bad old days—outbreaks of racial violence, say, or the appearance in court of some senescent war criminal—the respectable media's universal condemnation of the malefactors is seen as affirming the break with the past.

I AGREE WITHOUT HESITATION THAT GERmany today has little in common with the Germany of 1939. But I would add that it has quite a bit more in common than anyone wants to admit with the Germany of 1914. Germany on the eve of World War I enjoyed universal suffrage and the rule of law (including full civil and political rights for Jews). Its universities were among the world's best, despite (or perhaps because of) state subsidies and a hierarchical culture dominated by tyrannical *Professoren*. Its welfare system was the most generous in Europe. All this can be said of Germany today.

GERMANY IN 1914 WAS ALSO A COUNTRY IN which the Social Democratic Party had more popular support than any other party. Yet, when war broke out, the majority of the German left abandoned their party's traditional hostility to militarism and voted for war credits. Here the parallel with our own day is especially striking. Less than a decade ago, the German left was overwhelmingly hostile to the Gulf war, organizing large demonstrations against the "war for oil," just as it had organized demonstrations against the deployment of U.S. cruise and Pershing missiles in the early '80s. On past performance, a "Red-Green" coalition ought never to have supported German involvement in NATO's operation in Kosovo—in effect, a war in Europe. Yet the opponents of the war among the Social Democrats and Greens have been comprehensively defeated. Jürgen Habermas himself has given the war his blessing in the lofty columns of *Die Zeit*. So, for a time, did the novelist Günter Grass. Most amazing has been the spectacle of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer—once a hard-line Marxist who participated in demonstrations in support of the Baader-Meinhof gang—managing to avoid a "stop the war" resolution at last week's Green Party conference.

THIS ABANDONMENT OF ANTIMILITARISM is not as hard to explain as it might seem. For one thing, the German left was never against the use of force per se (witness Baader-Meinhof). Second, no economic interests appear to be at stake in Kosovo, so there is no base capitalist motive at work (as there seemed to be in Kuwait). Third, and most important, this is a war against "genocide." When German Defense Minister Rudolph Scharping briefed the press in March on the existence of mass graves and concentration camps in Kosovo, the implication was clear: post-Holocaust Germans have a special responsibility to prevent a repetition of "such scenes" in Europe. Yes, even if that means bombing Belgrade—again.

THERE IS ONLY ONE PROBLEM: HOWEVER indignant the Germans may feel about the behavior of the Serbian government, they are condemned to rely on others to do the dirty work, give or take a few Luftwaffe missions. Germany's principal contribution, as during the war in Bosnia, has been and will continue to be to accommodate the largest number of Kosovar refugees of any European Union country. And not only does Germany remain militarily inconsequential. More important, its economy is in a rut. German unemployment stands at 4.3 million. The country's labor costs are the highest in Europe. Debt as a proportion of gross domestic product has risen from 42 percent ten years ago to 61 percent today, mainly as a result of reunification; if unfunded pension liabilities are taken into account, the figure rises to approximately 200 percent. Here the similarities with the Kaiser's Germany undeniably end. For whatever else was wrong with the Reich of 1914, it certainly did not lack military power or economic resources. They were not enough to defeat the United Kingdom and the United States. But they certainly sufficed to beat Russia, Romania—and Serbia.

NIALL FERGUSON

The author's *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* has just been published in the U.S. by Basic Books, and in Germany as *Der Falsche Krieg* by DVA.

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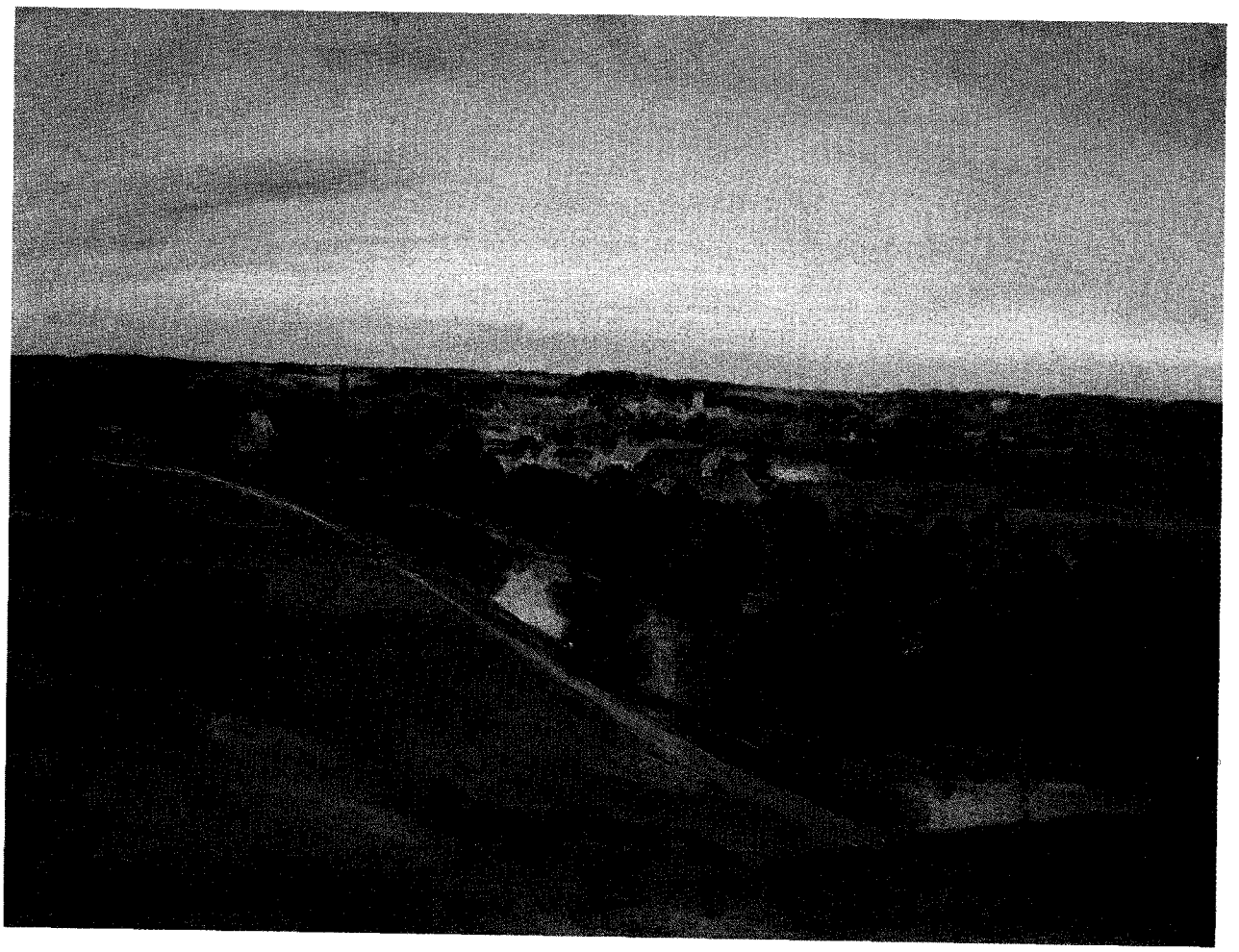
John Constable, R.A.

[1776–1837]



Stratford St. Mary from the Coombs, c.1800. Oil on canvas, 18⅞ × 25 inches

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